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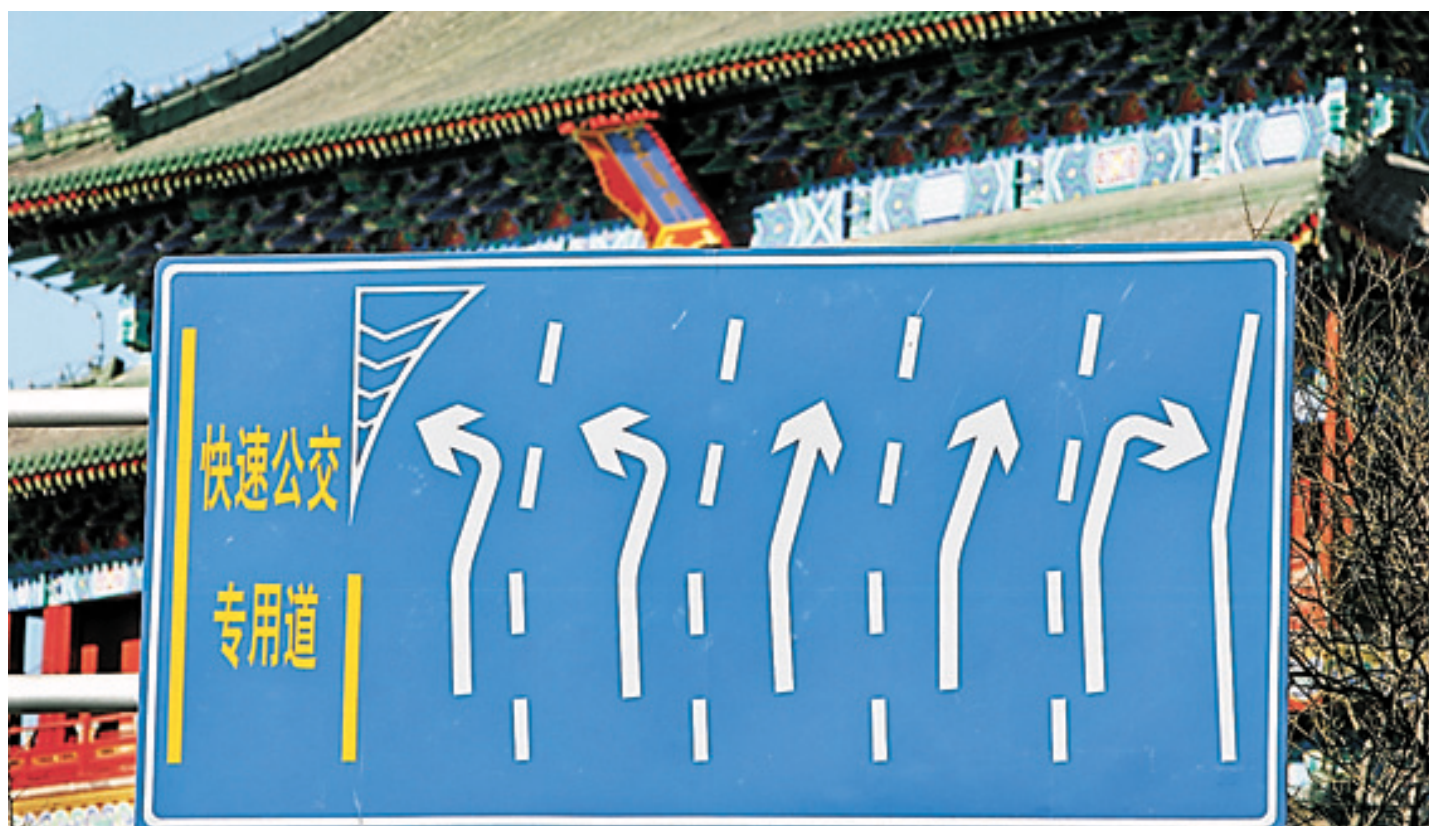


Beyond
Bauhaus
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Ancient homes
away from home
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→ Road ahead ←



The twisted traffic flow in Qianmen is represented in this new road sign: a metaphor for the last year. Countless turns kept the road to the Olympics from looking like anything but a straight line. Led by President Hu Jintao's "Bu Zhe Teng (don't get sidetracked)," how will this year's road look?

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Trials begin for milk scandal, compensation plan announced

By Zhang Dongya

The four executives of Sanlu Group, the dairy company that found infamy as the heart of last year's tainted milk scandal, stood trial Wednesday at Shijiazhuang Intermediate People's Court in Shijiazhuang, Hebei Province. Sanlu also went public with its initial compensation plan: a group fund for the 300,000 victims.

Ex-heads on death risk

Tian Wenhua, former chairwoman and general manager of Sanlu, and three other executives charged with producing and selling the tainted milk stood trial. The four were arrested September 26. Parents of children sickened by the tainted milk came from all over the country to see the trial.

Tian, 66, pleaded guilty to the charges against her. She told the court she learned about the melamine contamination from consumer complaints in mid-

May. She led a working team at the company to handle the case and submitted a report about the problematic powdered milk to the Shijiazhuang municipal government in August, she said.

The problem was her team was unfamiliar with a foreign director's presentation about European melamine standards, which allowed for 20 milligrams of melamine per kilogram of raw milk, she said. This was why the group failed to ban melamine in its milk products, she said.

Under present Chinese law, the courts could sentence Tian to 10 years' imprisonment, life imprisonment or death. A person can be sentenced to death for knowingly producing or selling a food containing toxic substances which cause death or serious bodily harm.

Compensation plan made public

A group of 22 local dairy

companies found to have produced melamine-tainted milk have pledged to make one-time payments to the scandal's 300,000 victims.

Liu Meiju, spokeswoman for the China Dairy Industry Association, confirmed the payment plan Tuesday. She said a fund was established for the victims and payments would be made. The association has also agreed to payments for victims who suffer from long-term effects.

According to the report from *Beijing News* Wednesday, some parents have already received information about the compensation plan. Children with "mild symptoms" will receive a one-time 2,000 yuan, sicker children will receive 30,000 yuan and families whose children perished will receive 200,000 yuan.

Besides, families who refused the compensation agreement can

make a registration and will be handled afterwards.

As many as six babies died and 294,000 other children suffered kidney and urinary damage from drinking contaminated baby formula.

Sanlu declared bankrupt

Beijing-based dairy company Sanyuan Food Group announced it will acquire Sanlu after the dairy producer declared bankruptcy on December 24.

The *Shanghai Daily* reported Wednesday that the Shijiazhuang city government said Sanyuan and Sanlu had signed a rental contract on Monday.

Sanlu Group, owned in part by New Zealand dairy giant Fonterra, stopped production on September 12. A bankruptcy petition for Sanlu said the company faced 1.1 billion yuan of debt.

On December 19, the company borrowed 900 million yuan



Wang Yuliang, Deputy General Manager of Sanlu said he felt guilty for the suffering babies and the families at the court.

Xinhua Photo

to pay the medical fees of children sickened by its melamine-tainted baby formula and to compensate the victims.

Dangdang cars return to Qianmen



By Venus Lee

Two tram cars, known as dangdang cars, began operating on the Qianmen Street on the first of the New Year. A round-trip ticket is 20 yuan per person and each tram seats 84 passengers. They made their debut in 1924, but were taken off the streets in 1966.

CFP Photo

Foreign markets forced out of tobacco sales

By Venus Lee

A clamp down on the sale of tobacco forced foreign-funded supermarkets and cigarette retailers out of the domestic tobacco business Wednesday. Current tobacco regulations require all sellers to be licensed, and licenses are only granted to Chinese sellers.

"Our supermarkets must remove all remaining tobacco from their shelves before the end of the year (Wednesday). Most of our counters are already rented to licensed tobacco sellers," Shi Yang, public relations manager for Carrefour North China, said.

Besides Carrefour, Lotus Supermarket also said it rented its tobacco counters to licensed sellers.

According to the regulations, foreign-owned companies cannot sell cigarettes in China, though they can rent counter space to licensed Chinese retailers who will sell cigarettes in their premises.

Although the rule took effect in 2007, many foreign-owned supermarkets remain unwilling to comply since tobacco sales generate 20 to 30 percent of their gross profit – more than any ordinary commodity.

"Supermarkets may rent their counters to an internal employee who has been licensed to sell cigarettes to cut their losses," said Yang Qingsong, information director of the China Chain Store and Franchise Association.

For convenience stores like 7-11, the losses could be more serious because they have limited space for an extra counter. Profits made on tobacco sales account for 10 to 20 percent of these stores' sales volume.

The regulations also prohibit the granting of tobacco sales licenses to sellers near primary and middle schools.

Even though there are many restrictions on cigarette selling, it likely will not affect consumers. Most grocery stores will continue to sell them.

New code of conduct for traffic cops

By Jin Zhu

The Ministry of Public Security released a new code of conduct for traffic police that took effect yesterday.

According to the new code of conduct, on duty officers may only give verbal warnings to drivers who commit minor infractions. "A minor infraction is one which does not affect the flow of

traffic or does not carry severe consequences," Wu Heping, the Ministry's press liaison, said.

The new code of conduct also stipulates appropriate language for on duty officers. "In some local departments, many traffic officers are rude or arrogant when they pull a driver over. We want to amend this," he said.

After handling an infraction,

traffic officers are responsible for encouraging drivers to handle the following legal papers. They do not want officers to rudely throw the license back at the driver, Wu said.

The announcement was preceded November 26 by the Ministry's announcement that it would begin placing "electronic eyes" in cars starting April.

"The 'electronic eye' has found

use in screening behavior all over the country. However, problems like no regulations on how or where to place the eyes has worried the public," Wu said while talking about new standards to govern eye use.

The Ministry also fixed an upper limit for delayed payment of traffic fines, which will take effect in April.

Taobao strikes at shark fin poachers

By Jin Zhu

Taobao.com has announced it will ban the sale of all shark fin products on its site starting this month.

According to the announcement, posted on its forum, the shopping Web site said any of its 400 million merchants found to be trading in shark fin or other regulated products will be punished according to regulations on the protection of wild animals.

"As one of the leading Internet

trading platforms, Taobao should protect wild animals by banning relevant products from online trade. The Web site is also responsible to for directing its members to trade in legal markets," Ni Liang, manager of Information Security Department in Taobao, said.

The announcement is part of a campaign initiated by the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and Taobao starting November 20 to combat the poaching of wildlife for online sale.

"Many people do not realize that eating shark fin is a cruel practice. The sharks whose fins are cut off are thrown back into the ocean to die a horrible, painful death," Grace Gabriel, the Asia Regional Director in IFAW, said.

According to an investigation from the IFAW, China is one of the main markets for shark fin products in Asia. Every year, the region consumes the fins of 70 million sharks in shark fin soup eaten mainly on the Chinese

mainland and Hong Kong.

"The increase in shark fin consumption promotes over-fishing of sharks and threatens more than 50 percent of the shark species with extinction. It is really amazing and wonderful that the leading cyber market in the world's biggest shark fin-consuming nation has stepped up to ban the trade," Peter Poeschel, the IFAW program manager, said.

"Taobao's decision to ban shark fin trade was applauded by many

users. Some activist users called on others to report online shark fin sales to site management in the online forum," Ni Liang said.

He said he believes the ban would gain more support from other auction sites and governments in other nations.

As one of the two sponsors for the campaign to protect wild animals, Taobao has also banned trade in tiger bone, rhino horn, elephant ivory, live snakes and pangolins.

Students greet 2009 in hanfu



Some 600 students in Hangzhou celebrated the coming of a new year by wearing hanfu and reading traditional books. CFP Photo

Houhai bar swindlers stand trial

By Venus Lee

A group found to have used young women on the Internet to entice men to bars where they were charged exorbitantly for drinks stood trial Tuesday.

The group, which operated at the Iron and Fish bar in Houhai, was accused of using 10 women and two men to seduce men seeking a real-life meeting with their chat partners.

Zhao Yucai, the organizer, was in charge of paying the girls their salaries and maintaining discipline. "I taught them how to talk to the victims and what to order from the menu," Zhao told the court.

During the trial, he named his accomplices and said the girls were given a 25-percent cut of the business. They stung their customers for a total 140,000 yuan.

Li Chunjia, 24, one of the 10 women, would pass on personal information on each victim to one of the other nine girls, who would then promise to meet him at the Iron and Fish, the procuratorate said.

Xiang Ruyi, one of the victims, told *Beijing Today* he was tricked when a woman chat buddy sent him sexually suggestive messages and asked for a date in Houhai. In the bar, the girl ordered wine, fruit and some dessert which cost him more than 2,000 yuan. "It was a big lesson for me," Xiang said.

The Xicheng police received a dozen of reports of similar disputes in Houhai since March, and they always seemed to be at the Iron and Fish, Qiaoshuijia and No. 2 bars, said Wang Weixue, Xicheng police director.

So far, the police have arrested 40 suspects.

To prevent repeat fraud, the district police began a system of bar registration, inspection and communication. Bars found to be conducting "irregular" business will be listed publicly.

The police have requested that bar-goers report any suspected illegal operations in Houhai by calling 6404 4902 or 6404 2740. Informants will be awarded 200 to 1,000 yuan for useful leads.

The court's verdict is pending as of press time.

Running Fan's Beijing job goes cold

By Han Manman

"Running Fan," as Fan Meizhong is popularly known, was punished again for his flight from a Sichuan classroom during the 2008 quake when a Beijing school was forced to delay hiring him.

Keyfind Education School, a private training institution, announced Sunday it decided to indefinitely postpone hiring Fan as a researcher and lecturer. The school had signed a two-year contract with the teacher.

"We had never anticipated this much trouble," school spokesman Zhang Wenbin told Xinhua news agency Monday, citing media pressure as interfering with Fan's hiring.

Fan's resurfacing started a new debate about whether the man who fled his classroom leaving all his pupils behind is still suitable for work in the education sector.

Running Fan was so nicknamed after he abandoned his entire class in the middle of the 8.0-magnitude Sichuan earthquake last year. At the time he was employed as a Chinese language teacher at a private high school in quake-hit Dujiangyan City.

None of his students were hurt during the quake. But about 10 days after the May 12 quake, Fan became a target when he wrote online, "Only for my own daughter could I consider sacrificing my life."

After he heard about school's decision, Fan cancelled his flight from Chengdu to Beijing last Sunday.

However, Fan said he understood their decision.

"The school faced some pressure. I, on the other hand, did not because I do not care what the public says about me," he said.

Fan said he and the dean have much in common on many issues including educational ideas. "But it is a business world, everyone has his own considerations. I don't know if the dean really appreciated me or was using me to promote his school. Regardless, I understand," he said.

Fan said he has enjoyed months of quiet since this August, but the media once again has him in its crosshairs.

"I don't blame the media. They have a right to focus on matters of public interest, and this story is no secret. The sticking point is



Fan Meizhong defends for himself on a talk show. CFP Photo

the powers that meddled in this matter after the media reports came out," Fan said.

Fan lives in Chengdu. His wife writes children's stories and edits a children's magazine. He also has a one-year-old daughter.

"Since I lost my job for what I said, my wife has had to support our family. But I cannot depend on her forever: I need to earn money for my family," Fan said.

He said he could find work in a bookstore or in publications.

"I insist on working as a teacher because I have mature educational ideas and have confidence in my ability," Fan said.

An online survey on Monday on major web portal Sohu showed 41 percent of respondents supported Fan's continued employment in the education sector.

Some netizens said Fan lost his qualifications the moment he ran, while other noted that teachers are human too, and are equally susceptible to a lapse in judgment.

Doubts mount over country's first 'carbon free' city

A pipe dream

"Dongtan is nothing but a pipe dream," said Cindy Wu, a local teacher in Shanghai who was once keen to buy a house in the eco-city on Chongming Island, off the coast of the East China Sea.

"The site where the eco-city was supposed to be developed remains untouched. It has miles of muddy farms and wetlands, but not one eco-building can be seen," she said.

Wu, 35, said she noticed the project in 2005 when the municipal government announced a joint program between the Chinese and British governments.

In a country overloaded with environmental challenges, Wu said, the Dongtan project was popular and seemed a model for the country undergoing rapid urbanization.

Under the original plan, the new city will feature a carefully designed mix of housing, retail shopping, post offices, schools, nurseries and healthcare facilities that minimizes the need to travel long distances for essential services. This would enable residents to walk or bike to work, school and local shops.

The city would generate its own energy by burning waste from surrounding rice paddies. Sewage would be pumped back and used to fertilize the fields. Solar and wind power would fill in any shortfalls and intra-city transport would be handled by hydrogen or electricity.

"It sounds like the perfect place to live, and everyone with money wanted a share. But not now, because it's unclear whether any of it will even be built," Wu said.

Construction of the first phase of the eco-city was postponed indefinitely in 2006, while the projected population for that phase fell to 5,000 and the primary focus narrowed to building an environment-related research institute.

Shanghai Industrial Investment Corporation (SIIC), the property developer, could not be reached for comment. Former reports said some permits for the project have already lapsed.

Political concerns or hype

The reason why the eco-project fell out of favor changes with each report. One thing is certain: the Dongtan plan hit the rocks after its main sponsor Chen Liangyu, former Communist Party secretary of Shanghai and politburo member, was brought down in September 2006, Chen was sentenced to 18 years imprisonment for fraud.

Because Dongtan was announced during Chen's reign, the project was tainted by his scandal. None in the current Shanghai administration is willing to touch it, an industry insider said.

"For our part, there is no time pressure on when to develop

By Huang Daohen

If everything had gone right, the first residents would be in their new eco-homes in Dongtan on Shanghai's Chongming Island. As a test in sustainable living, Dongtan had a lofty ambition: to become the world's first carbon-free city with a half-million residents.

But the project was stalled by delays and faces rising doubts over whether its "emission free" image is nothing but hype.



Originally scheduled to have its first phase completed by 2010, construction has stalled.

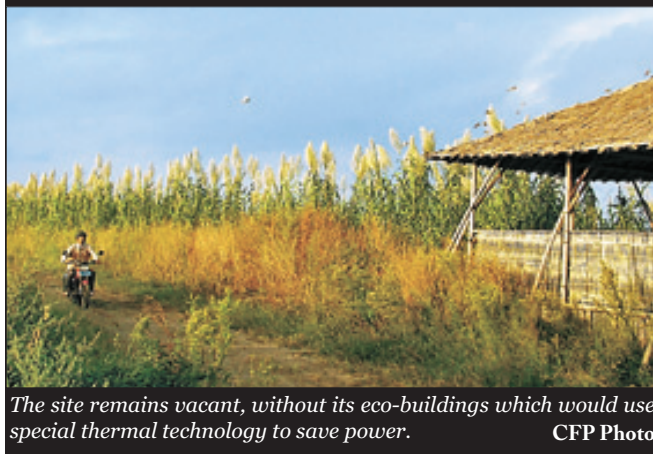
Photos provided by Ove Arup



Chongming Island is expected to be an example a community of ecological harmony.



Other islands have eco-copycats, but the Dongtan's message is lost.



The site remains vacant, without its eco-buildings which would use special thermal technology to save power.

CFP Photo

Dongtan," said Roger Wood, an associate director of Arup, the London-based consulting firm selected to design the project.

The company has backed away from its original timetable. "We are simply the engineers of a project and work on the program based on what we are given by our client (SIIC)," he said.

"Every year in Shanghai you have to renew your planning permissions, and we are still waiting for (this year's) permission to come through," Wood told *Beijing Today*. He also suggested the slowdown may be attributed to the current financial crisis.

Plans for Dongtan have helped raise Arup's profile in China. The company also worked on iconic venues for the Beijing Olympics, including the National Stadium, popularly known as the Bird's Nest.

Others, however, attribute the failure of the eco-city plan as its being too costly to be feasible. "An emission-free city is pure commercial hype," Dai Xingyi, a professor at Shanghai's Fudan University, was quoted by local media as saying.

Dai said true "zero-emissions" came with a big price tag. Generating electricity from wind would be at least twice as expensive as using coal, and solar power could be 10 times more expensive.

Construction costs could be at least 30 or 40 percent more for a typical development of the same size, he said.

"I doubt anyone would be willing to pay for it," he added.

Emerging eco-copycats

Instead of the marred Dongtan plan, a rash of building has begun on Chongming Island, which will be connected to Shanghai by a new bridge and tunnel next year.

Developers are trying to sell

new high-rise apartment blocks labeled as eco-communities, borrowing the language of Dongtan. But the buildings are not powered by renewable energy, nor are they built to any particular standards, Wu said.

Some of the buildings are used as vacation homes. Tourists can take boat rides, go fishing and enjoy some games, she said.

Wu said some of the tourists and local farmers have no idea what an eco-city might be. "For many, ecological means living in an area which has more green than normal and where there are trees," she said.

Eco-cities still the future

While doubts continue over the environmental value of the project, some experts see such eco-cities as the future of urban development.

"Accepting that urbanization in the developing world is inevitable, it is probably better to build nominal eco-cities than standard low-efficiency buildings and urban infrastructure," the Fudan University's Dai said.

He said the nation will reach an urban population of 1 billion by 2030, where and how they live are questions of global concern.

The proportion of Chinese living in urban areas more than doubled from 1980 and 2005. As that trend accelerates over the next 20 years, McKinsey Global Institute predicts that China will need to build almost 40 billion square meters of floor space in some 5 million buildings.

The planet cannot sustain that pace at current levels of energy, water and soil usage, Dai said.

"Anyone who hopes for a sustainable future cannot fail to see China as an opportunity for dramatic steps forward."

'Bu zhe teng' set to become 2009 catchphrase

By Huang Daohen

Bu zhe teng, a phrase uttered by President Hu Jintao at the conference celebrating the country's reform era, has become the newest catchphrase, receiving the most attention home and abroad among the contents of his speech.

When talking about the country's goal of building a more prosperous, modern and democratic society, Hu said the plan would surely be realized if "we 'bu dong yao, bu xie dai and bu zhe teng' on our way to creating a socialist society with Chinese characteristics." Since then, the phrase has made headlines in newspapers across the country.

China Daily translated the quote as "don't sway back and forth, relax our efforts or get sidetracked."

Media and blog posts over the past week have attempted to explain precisely what Hu meant by "don't get sidetracked" and Wang Chen, Minister of the State Council Information Office, offered his interpretation Tues-

day during a press conference.

Wang said Hu's speech at the meeting had profound ideological content and contained vivid language drawn from the masses. He said Hu's mention of "don't get sidetracked" at such a solemn occasion meant he wanted to express that the great successes achieved by the party and the people over the last 30 years of reforms "were fundamentally an unwavering adherence to socialism with Chinese characteristics, an unwavering adherence to the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics."

"Don't get sidetracked" means that we must advance courageously down this road, and it is indeed the wish of everyone in the country and the common will of the entire party, Wang said.

"I too noticed that when the General Secretary mentioned the three don'ts, the audience chuckled in understanding, showing that they truly endorsed President Hu's words," he said.

Sidelights

It is not easy being a government translator in China. At almost all official events and press conferences, a Chinese-English translator would be around, required instantly to bridge the gap between officials and foreign journalists.

Most of the time, they do a fairly decent job. But a recent phrase from Chinese president Hu Jintao had translators, foreign media and even academics, flummoxed.

The words "bu zhe teng" – or do not "zhe teng" – drew audible gasps and laughter from the audience at the Great Hall of the People. "Zhe teng" is a phrase popular among people in northern China, but rarely, if ever, used by central government officials in a formal setting.

What does it mean in English? Here's the tricky part.

It is one of those Chinese phrases that seem almost impossible to be neatly translated into English.

Some English media translated it as "don't flip flop," "don't get sidetracked," "don't sway back and forth" and "no major changes."

Perhaps finding the task too cumbersome, Xinhua news agency left the phrase out of its English dispatches altogether.

The wordy "don't do something over and over again, and to little effect" seem to capture it best. Essentially, the phrase "zhe teng" has negative connotations and is usually used to refer to someone who keeps trying new things, but in a messy and disorientated way and with no useful final product to show.

– Peh Shing Hueis, correspondent for Singapore's *The Straits Times*

Landmine mission ends

(Reuters) – The country will soon complete a third mission to clear its border with Vietnam of landmines, ahead of a deadline to demarcate their territorial boundaries, Xinhua news agency reported Wednesday.

China cleared more than 6,800 landmines at its Friendship Pass border with Vietnam, Xinhua said, citing the headquarters of the regional army command.

Both countries normalized relations in 1990 after 10 years of confrontation over border issues. They reached an agreement in 2005 to demarcate their land border by 2008.

"No one really knows how many mines are buried on the border," Lieutenant-Colonel Fu Xiutang, one of the leaders of the mine-clearing mission was quoted as saying. The number has been estimated to be as high as 2 million.

Almost 6,000 Chinese in Wenshan Prefecture along the border have died or were injured by landmines since 1979, Xinhua said, citing the Yunnan local government.

Financial woes hit top universities too

(Reuters) – The global financial crisis, which has dented endowments at the top universities in the West, has also reduced funding to China's universities, said the president of one of the country's most prestigious schools.

Peking University is under pressure for funds, even as its graduates face a harder time getting jobs, Zhou Qifeng told a conference last weekend.

"As a state-funded college, Peking University will definitely bear it heavily if state tax revenue is affected by the crisis," he said, according to remarks posted on the university's Web site Tuesday.

"We also feel pressure in raising money from private sponsors ... Some of them cannot fulfill their promises on schedule, but we truly understand their difficulties."

Peking University is not alone in feeling pinched. The plunge in stock markets has cut the US's Yale University's endowment by 25 percent between the end of June and early December, while Harvard's endowment fell by 22 percent in roughly the same period.

More of China's billionaires hail from Peking University than from any other, according to the China University Alumni Association. Peking University's 35 billionaire alumni include sportswear manufacturer Li Ning and the heads of home-grown Internet giants Baidu and Sina.com.

Zhou acknowledged that the school's graduates, most of whom found jobs easily before the crisis, are facing a bleaker job market this year.

"Our faculty should work harder on teaching to make the students more competitive," he said.

Tour de Ski China kicks off in Inner Mongolia



Tour de Ski China kicked off its second leg in Xiwuqi, Inner Mongolia over the weekend. As many as 100 elite skiers from Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Switzerland, France, Russia and China participated. The event will go on to Changchun, Jilin Province and Shangri-la, Yunnan Province on January 5 and 6, respectively.

(By Huang Daohen)

Photo provided by Nordic Ways

When to buy? When to sell? When to divorce?

(Reuters) – Fears of a prolonged recession in China have triggered a sharp increase in divorce inquiries addressed to lawyers and financial advisers, *China Daily* reported Monday, with timing a key issue.

Wealthy spouses were keen to strike a deal while asset values were low, the newspaper quoted the director of the China Divorce Service Center, Shu Xin, as saying.

"While facing tough financial times is not usually the main

reason couples split, it can serve as the last straw for already strained marriages or add new concerns to divorces underway," the daily said, quoting "marriage advisers."

"Many questions are about how to avoid paying off debts after the divorce and the number of such telephone inquiries has increased from 200 to 300 in recent months," Ming Li, who works for the country's first marriage and finance firm, Shanghai Weiqing, said.

But China University of Political Science and Law professor Wu Changzhen said it may be too early to know the impact of the financial crisis on divorce rates.

"It seems the rates may have dropped since the downturn, because divorces are expensive," he was quoted as saying.

"It has become extremely difficult for couples wanting to divorce to sell their homes at a reasonable price and to maintain two separate households."

According to a separate story

carried on the China News Service Web site (chinanews.com), the number of people seeking divorce advice increased by 30 percent in the second half of this year.

Most of the inquiries were about how to protect property, it said.

There were 2.1 million divorces in China in 2007, nearly seven times the figure of 1980 when nationwide economic reforms were launched, the *China Daily* quoted the Ministry of Civil Affairs as saying.

Gov takes steps to yuan settlement

By Huang Daohen

Buying Made-in-China? Pay yuan, please.

The State Council said it will begin trial settlement of the yuan for goods trading in some areas and supporting measures are being formulated.

One trial, a potential first step to making the yuan an international currency, will be for trade between two regions on the Chinese mainland—Guangdong Province and the Yangtze River Delta and Hong Kong and Macau off the mainland.

The State Council said it will also start another trial to allow the yuan to be used as a settlement currency for trade between Yunnan Province and the Guangxi

Zhuang autonomous region with ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) members.

The initiative emerged from a meeting last week of the State Council, but no details were available on when it would be implemented, according to the cabinet's statement. But supervisory departments are planning pilot programs and have discussed supporting measures for the trial, the *Beijing Youth Daily* reported.

Detailed policies will be formulated under the leadership of the People's Bank of China. Officials in relevant departments and the State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE) are discussing supporting measures, the report said.

Economist hails yuan trade scheme

The yuan settlement trial is potentially a significant step that underlines the yuan's growing importance as a currency of international trade, Zhao Xiao, economics professor with the University of Science and Technology Beijing, said.

While the immediate impact of the move will be limited, as the yuan remains non-convertible, it will boost regional trade, he said.

The ASEAN bloc represents a region in the world that is still growing economically at a time when all the major devel-

oped economies are facing recession. To an extent, yuan-denominated trade already exists in some ASEAN member countries. The new scheme, therefore, formalizes existing trade arrangements and works to expand them.

Zhao hails the timing of the scheme's announcement on Christmas Eve. "It was probably no accidental. World markets would be shut and most Western policymakers on holiday. They would have few opportunities to respond," he said.

Problems ahead

Though industry insiders support the yuan settlement trial, many have remained cautious and are waiting to hear more detailed policies and information. "Details haven't been released so I have no idea what charge off is involved. Maybe there won't be the concept of charge off with yuan settlement," a

financial director surnamed Huang with an import and export company in Zhejiang Province said.

This problem involves many areas such as management of current accounts, charge off, settlement of payment and management of declaration of international payment, he said.

Another key problem is how foreign companies can get sufficient yuan funding, Wen Yijun, industrial analyst with Oriental Securities, said.

If bilateral trade should be settled in yuan, a prerequisite is that foreign companies have enough yuan, but how will they

get it? Will they continue to use small amounts of cash as they have in the past, or will they be able to change their own currency into yuan through the foreign exchange market? This depends on whether the government allows free yuan exchange in relevant areas, Wen said.

Market watch

Largest domestic law firm plans Swiss link-up

King & Wood, the country's largest law firm, is set to announce the first merger with a foreign law firm, underlining the growing international ambitions of domestic legal practices.

King & Wood plans to integrate SG Fafalen, a Swiss law firm registered in Hong Kong.

The Swiss firm's founder and owner, Serge Fafalen, could facilitate access to "petrodollar" clients, particularly in Russia, where he has spent much of his professional life, King & Wood said.

"In the Russian bloc of influence, we definitely [pick up] a missing piece," Ching-Wo Ng, a King & Wood partner, said.

"Because of China's interest in oil and other resources, we believe that we need to take a closer look at that region."

With more than 1,200 employees, including about 700 lawyers, King & Wood has developed over 15 years into China's largest law firm by headcount and has advised many multinationals active in the domestic market.

It has also already established a joint venture with a Japanese law firm, an alliance with an Australian counterpart, as well as opening a New York office in September this year. SG Fafalen has 100 employees and Fafalen will become a partner in the Chinese firm.

Some other leading firms have also set up representative offices in the US in what Ng described as the start of an overseas drive by Chinese firms.

(FT)

Foreign banks ask for tax delay



A group of foreign banks have asked the Chinese government to delay its recently imposed tax on interest paid on borrowings from overseas, arguing the tax would exacerbate the impact of the global financial crisis, the *Wall Street Journal* reported.

The newspaper cited a petition signed by 36 foreign lenders.

The government will levy a 10-percent withholding tax, retroactive as of yesterday, on interest payments on all loans to domestic banks from overseas lenders, the paper said on its Web site.

A lower rate of 7 percent will apply to lenders from places with which China has a tax treaty, such as Hong Kong, it said.

"Under the current economic environment and the global financial crisis, the interest tax on overseas loans will hugely hurt banks' liquidity and put them under greater cost pressure," Hang Seng Bank, a unit of HSBC, said in an e-mailed statement.

"Hang Seng China hopes that relevant authorities can delay the tax, taking into account the banks' current operating environment and business pressure."

The 36 foreign banks, which include HSBC Holdings Plc, Standard Chartered Plc and Bank of East Asia, said in their petition that the tax was an excessive burden on China operations, which typically have small deposit bases.

The foreign banks have asked that they only be required to pay the withholding tax on interest payments that occur after December 4 while Beijing reviews the petition, and that any back-payment be put on hold. (Agencies)

Eastern to get another 4 bln yuan

Eastern Airlines said Tuesday it will get an additional 4 billion yuan capital injection from the government, on top of the 3 billion yuan in aid already earmarked.

The expected extra cash comes as China Eastern, the worst performing of the country's three major airlines, suffered millions of dollars in losses from fuel hedging and a sharp contraction in global aviation demand.

But the tepid reaction of its share price to the government announcement suggests traders and analysts expect the funding to provide only short-term relief while the outlook for the industry remains bleak.

The company said it will use the new funds to improve its cash flow. As part of the bailout, the Shanghai-based carrier will sell 1.44 billion A shares at 3.87 yuan each to its parent, China Eastern Air Holding, and the same amount of H shares at one yuan each to a wholly owned unit of the parent.

Lenovo expected to restructure

Lenovo, the world's fourth largest personal computer maker, is expected to restructure its operations due to weak demand amid the global slowdown, *China Business News* reported Wednesday.

Under the restructuring plan, which has yet to be finalized, Lenovo would merge its Asia Pacific operations with its Greater China and Russia operations, it reported, citing unnamed company officials.

Chen Shaopeng, president for the Greater China region, will be appointed as head of the merged operations, the newspaper reported. David Miller, currently president for the Asia Pacific region, is expected to leave the company, it added.

"The economic conditions are so tough that (the company) is set to take some measures to counter the winter," Chen was quoted as saying.

A spokesman for Beijing-based Lenovo declined to comment on the report when contacted by AFP.

Morgan Stanley's China property head resigns

Garth Peterson, a top property dealmaker for Wall Street bank Morgan Stanley in China, has resigned, sources with direct knowledge of the matter told Reuters on Wednesday.

Peterson, a Shanghai-based managing director of Morgan Stanley Real Estate, who headed its China operations, resigned from the bank last week and his departure has been announced internally to property investment-related staff at the bank in Asia, the sources said.

Morgan Stanley Real Estate set up its Shanghai office responsible for China deals in 2006 and Peterson, who speaks fluent Chinese, earned his reputation in the country's property sector by leading several landmark deals of top-end residential projects for the real estate fund of the US bank.

Morgan Stanley was not immediately available for comment.

(Agencies)

Should officials sleeping on the job be dismissed?

By Huang Daohen

The local government in the city of Hengyang, Hunan Province, sacked six officials who were photographed asleep at a recent meeting and whose images were published online, the local government said.

This created a very poor impression of government workers and the move was part of a broader crackdown on bureaucratic indolence and corruption, the city government said in a statement on its Web site.

The six, including company managers and officials of government agencies, were attending an event to mark 30 years of economic reform and opening, a key anniversary for the nation. During the meeting, the six cadres were photographed napping.

The photographs were subsequently posted on the Internet and carried by major sites such as NetEase, iFeng and Xinhua.

Afterwards, Zhang Wenxiong, the secretary of the city's party committee, asked that the case be investigated. The local disciplinary



Officials caught napping at the meeting were sacked. CNS Photo

committee identified the officials and on December 25, the city party's standing committee decided to relieve the six of their party and administrative duties.

"The sackings are intended to strictly enforce discipline and reverse the bad impact this has made on society," an official surnamed Li, with the city's department of propaganda, told *Beijing Today*.

Li said the incident, as well as the disciplinary action, will be pub-

licized across the city. However, he declined to disclose who took the pictures and how they were posted on the Internet.

The city's action generated heated discussion online, with a certain amount of sympathy going to the dozing officials. Many netizens claimed the punishment was unfair and not necessarily the officials' fault, because meetings are often long and tedious. Others said the officials should be severely punished to set an example.

Comment

Sleeping not a crime if not at work

If it were me, I wouldn't have sacked them but given them a chance if the meeting was really important. The only mistake they made was napping, but it isn't a crime since it was not stipulated in the program that napping is a crime. They didn't cause any damage or jeopardize the meeting.

If they were caught napping while at work, it is reasonable to fire them. But if it was a doctor, nurse or pilot napping while at work? Not only fire them but charge them with endangering lives.

— Roberto Chen, editor, Xinhua news agency

Find ways to keep audience awake

If writers cannot put together exciting speeches to

keep their audience awake, may I suggest taking away the comfortable chairs and the air-conditioner? Standing in the cold will ensure an attentive audience while keeping the speech to a bare minimum.

— Felix, engineer in Suzhou

Should be forgiven
The six should be forgiven if the meeting was boring. It is always up to the speakers to improve the quality of their speeches rather than blame those who fell asleep.

— Simon Zhang, government employee

Sleeping or resting eyes?
Can we really be sure that the people in question were sleeping? Maybe they were just resting their eyes. You can listen with your eyes closed.

— Jeff Bass, expat teacher from the US

Controversy over netizens' commemoration of Japanese star

By Wang Yu

"There are no stockings in heaven and may peace be with you, Ai Ijima," a blogger said on his site.

Similar articles expressing sadness and sympathy showed up on the Internet after the former Japanese porn star was found dead in her Tokyo apartment on Christmas Eve. The outpouring of condolences led to a heated debate online on why Chinese people should commemorate Ijima.

Ijima started her career as an adult film actress but ended up in the mainstream movie industry. Unlike the country's other porn stars, she made this quick and successful transition in 1993.

Reports about Ijima's death quickly spread to the Chinese online community. Her name was ranked first by Baidu after news of her death came out, with a search rate of about 330,000 per day. Netizens mourned her on their blogs. Mainstream media put the

topic at the top of their entertainment pages. Sites such as Sina and QQ.com did specials on her.

The sale of adult movies is illegal in China, and the country's cultural roots have kept sex a silent taboo. But it is precisely these that have given a special role to erotic literature and adult movies — as guides to sexual enlightenment.

In the 1990s, pirates produced porn VCDs. Most teen-agers and young adults, especially males, watched these films together with close friends at home, trembling in fear at being caught by their parents. Now, the Internet has made it easy to download porn with tools such as eMule or BitTorrent.

Japan's adult movie industry could never have imagined that its products would form an underground culture in China. The attitude of the media towards the death of Ijima shows something is changing in the country's sensibilities.



Ai Ijima

IC Photo

County spends huge on artificial tourism projects

By Zhang Dongya

Fengxian, a small county in north-western Shaanxi Province, spent more than 2 million yuan making an artificial moon and 2,700 artificial stars to spur local tourism. But residents of the locality, which has a rich tradition of folk culture, say officials should have used the money to develop local culture instead of creating artificial projects.

With a population of about 120,000 people, Fengxian is known for its mining industry, particularly zinc and lead. The local government, however, converted the county into a "scenic resort."

Over the past two years, the county has invested 650 million yuan in developing its tourism industry. Five special "scenic zones" and huge parks have been built to attract visitors. Along Provincial Route 212, a "scenic corridor" stretches tens of kilometers. On both sides, buildings were constructed in traditional architecture.

The local government even spent more than 2 million yuan building on its mountains an "artificial moon," with a diameter of 4 meters, and 2,700 "artificial stars."

"Comparatively speaking, it is economically and environmentally friendly. The lights of the 'moon' and 'stars' use solar energy, do not consume electricity or cause pollution," said a spokeswoman surnamed Wang, with the country's Office for Publicity and Communication.

Fengxian also constructed a 186-meter-tall fountain, dubbed "Asia's highest fountain," and huge gardens with hundreds of hectares of peony and tulip, claiming to be the "only garden in the air in western China."

The local tourism bureau said that in 2007, the county received 250,000 tourists and generated 120 million yuan in tourism revenues. Figures for 2008 are expected to register 400,000 tourists and an income of 300 million yuan.

Meanwhile, many local residents say developing their rich cultural tradition would have been more worthy of the money. According to a survey by Baoji, the city which encompasses Fengxian, folk songs and folk tales from Fengxian make up 45 percent of the city's total.

Comment

Only way to learn about sex

I felt guilty after I watched an adult movie for the first time in a middle school classmate's home. But it was the only way for most of us to learn about sex. Even some girls didn't know much about their bodies before they watched an adult movie.

— Li Xiaoxiong, financial manager

A star created by the local pop culture

The Japanese star had an impacted on Hong Kong and

Taiwan pop stars and their works. Ai Ijima has also become the symbol of Japanese adult videos on the mainland.

Li Zongsheng, the famous Taiwanese musician, made a song called "Being Upset Recently". It became a hit and in it Li said, "I dreamed that I was having dinner with Ai Ijima."

— He Yuxin, newspaper editor

Society's tolerance improving

In the pre-Internet period, a banned book called *The Heart of a Girl* was popular among

young people in the 1970s. The book spread by copying by hand. Now the subculture has become public topic.

I think it shows improvement in our society and its tolerance.

— Su Yi, writer

Don't just follow the crowd

People wrote articles to show their sympathy and said they grew up watching Ai Ijima's movies.

But I don't believe it. The age when she glittered was about 10 years ago.

— Ning Caishen, scriptwriter

Comment

Rush projects

Within only two years, five scenic zones and five large parks have been constructed, including several other huge landscaping projects. Did these go through sufficient planning or were just rush decisions? I guess it is the latter.

— Citi-animals, a netizen on 163.com

Lacking culture

Culture is the soul of tourism. At first, we focused only on developing ecological tourism, and as

a result, the cultural part has been neglected.

— Liang Ruili, vice director of Fengxian's tourism department

Only a "night glory"

The small county with such bright lights at night looks very modern, but they it appears flashy and a total bore for travelers.

The "artificial moon" only makes me laugh.

— Tia Sun, middle school teacher

The adventures of a musician and his Stradivarius

By He Jianwei

A magical red violin went around the world from owner to owner. To each owner, the violin brought anger, betrayal, love and sacrifice. This is a story from the movie *The Red Violin*, which received an Academy Award for Best Original Score in 1999.

The film was inspired by one of Stradivarius's violins, which are famous for the quality of their sound. His violins have defied attempts to explain or reproduce their quality. Throughout the movie, the solos are played by renowned US violinist Joshua Bell.

Bell played on Wednesday and Thursday evening at the 2009 New Year's Concert for the Performing Arts in the music hall of the National Center for Performing Arts with his Stradivarius violin, called the Gibson ex Huberman, which was made in 1713.

Bell's violin has its own amazing story: it has been stolen twice from its previous owner, Bronislaw Huberman, who was a Polish virtuoso violinist.

In 1919, the violin was taken from Huberman's hotel room in Vienna, but was quickly returned by the authorities after the thief supposedly offered it to a dealer.



Joshua Bell and his 1713 Stradivarius at the National Center for the Performing Arts this week.

Photo provided by National Center for Performing Arts

The last disappearance was from New York's Carnegie Hall in 1936 when Huberman performed at a concert and upon returning to his dressing room discovered his precious violin gone.

Fifty years later, the thief, a cafe musician, admitted as he was dying in jail that he was responsible for the crime.

Bell first encountered the violin at a concert where the owner at that time let him

play a few notes. "I thought it was the most amazing-sounding violin I had ever seen," Bell said.

The owner jokingly told Bell that maybe someday he could have the violin, if Bell could come up with 27 million yuan.

Five years later, Bell saw the violin again and discovered it was about to be sold to a German industrialist to become part of a collection.

Bell negotiated with the owner for two days. In order to get the 300-year-old Stradivarius, he had to sell his old friend, the violin he used for *The Red Violin*.

"Buying an instrument is like buying a house. I usually sell the old one to buy a better one," he said.

His first recording made with the new violin was *Romance of the Violin* in 2003. Three years later, he released

his most recent CD "Voice of the Violin," which features vocal parts arranged for the violin.

"The idea for these two albums is that the music was written for the voice or other instruments," he said. "All the music was written in the 19th century and I tried to bring back that tradition."

Of the more than 1,100 violins made during Stradivarius's lifetime, about half are thought to still exist.



An old man in Arong's film symbolizes Yugong Yishan.

By Wang Yu

People were packed into the Yugong Yishan nightclub on December 18 to watch a documentary on Beijing's underground music scene. But the DVD players did not work which spelled the end of the screening.

Joanna Vasquez Arong, the film director, could not hide her disappointment. "Next time I will definitely insist on using a tape," she said.

The film caught the attention of people who are interested in the Chinese capital's underground music scene. The way Arong tells the story, juxtaposing different timelines, shows the young director's talent.

Arong was raised in the Philippines and later moved to the US

for high school. She later returned to her home country where she started working on short documentaries. She heard about Beijing's music scene and decided to move to the city in 2002 to pursue her dream of filmmaking.

"I was also attracted by the early films of Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige about western China," she said.

Arong's film was about the time when the old Yugong Yishan bar was about to be demolished. The nightclub got its name from an ancient fable: an old man was called a fool for attempting to cut a path through the mountains that isolated his village from the outside world.

"In 2006, I met Gouzi, the owner of the club, for the first time. I asked him about his life and his principles

for choosing the bands that perform at Yugong Yishan. Gouzi said he prefers musicians who express their emotions about life rather than those that play Western cover music. It was that spirit which touched me," Arong said.

Money is always the biggest problem for independent artists, especially filmmakers. Arong's Yugong Yishan documentary was made through friends' financial support. Prior to taking the plunge into film directing, she worked in various fields including finance and economic development.

The Yugong Yishan film has just been accepted into the 14th Hong Kong Independent Short Film and Video Awards. But Arong is already preparing for her next documentary on Thai women.

Philippine documentarian focuses on Beijing's underground music scene



Arong develops two timelines in her documentary to show the spirit of the subculture.

Photo provided by Joanna Vasquez Arong

Israeli, Palestinian envoys in Beijing defend positions on Gaza

By Han Manman

The Palestinian envoy in Beijing on Monday denounced Israel for its latest air strikes on Gaza, while the Israeli ambassador defended his country's position.

Yousef Ramadan, counselor of the Palestinian embassy, said the Israeli leadership is building its credentials for the coming election "on Palestinian blood." He denounced the continuing Israeli air strikes on Gaza City as genocide "against humanity not just against the Palestinian people." He appealed to the international community to act urgently to stop the attacks and lift the siege of Gaza.

"Our people's blood is being used and we believe such action

will lead to nowhere but violence and more casualties," he said.

He demanded an immediate halt to the attack, calling for humanitarian supplies of food and medicine to be allowed into Gaza.

Yousef said the attack that started over the weekend targeted Palestinian civilians, not Hamas militants as Israel claimed, leading to the deaths of hundreds of civilians.

However, in Monday's news conference in Beijing, Israeli ambassador Amos Nadai insisted the attack was aimed to "eliminate the capabilities of Hamas." He refused to say how long the action will last.

Nadai rejected Palestinian statements and media reports speculating the attack was meant

to serve the upcoming general election in Israel.

He said Israel was forced to fight back because of Hamas's continuous rocket attacks on Israeli citizens.

He said that from the outset, Israel had set out to minimize casualties but admitted that there were "terrible sights coming out of Gaza," and that his country was likely to suffer in terms of public opinion.

"I understand people's reaction, but they deserve to be told the whole picture. I am not sure they will change their minds, because seeing a bloody child or a child with blood-covered wounds is a terrible sight."

He said the military operation against Gaza would con-

tinue until it had achieved its goal of eliminating Hamas capability to shell Israeli civilian targets.

"We've done all the things we can do for peace. We left Gaza, signed the agreement with Palestine, but all the efforts failed," Nadai said, adding, "Hamas should take full responsibility for the civilian casualties in the air attack."

On Wednesday evening, Israeli war planes carried out three airstrikes on targets near the Gaza. Four Palestinians were injured in the attacks.

According to Palestinian health officials, the death toll in the airstrikes since December 27 has reached 400, while at least 2,000 have been injured.

Celebration of Chilean wine culture

By Gan Tian

The Art Bridge Gallery at the 798 Art District was illuminated last Saturday by "The Art of Wine-A Night of Chilean Culture & Wine." Co-hosted by the Chilean Embassy in China, the event featured wine tasting, a cultural performance and an art exhibition, providing guests with the opportunity to taste and experience Chile's culture.

"We hope this party will serve as an opportunity for our Chinese friends to further understand, and hopefully fall in love with Chilean culture," Fernando Reyes Matta, ambassador of the Republic of Chile, said. "There is a Chinese saying, 'Is it not a joy to have friends come from afar?' We are here today from faraway South America, and we hope this friendship will be everlasting."

Chile is one of the country's main wine suppliers, as its geography and climate have facilitated the growth of world-renown vineyards. At the event, famous Chilean vineyards Vina Balduzzi, Vina San Pedro and Vina Santa Rita treated guests to six different Chilean wines, of varying vintage and taste.

"Chilean wine is well-known around the world, but only recently have many Chilean wines been introduced to China," Mario Artaza, trade director of the Chilean Embassy, said.

He also said that more and more people in the country are getting to know and appreciate Chilean wine.

For the event, the National Ballet Group of Chile, BAFOCHI, flew to the capital. They performed Chilean music and dance, which complemented the poetry, paintings and wine.

The event was preceded by the launch of wine commentator Susie Wu's new book, *Wines from the Paradise - Chilean Wines*. It is the author's first comprehensive book on Chilean wines and the launch was hosted by the Business Affairs Department of the Chilean Embassy.

Sharing the flavors of Canada



Photo by Wei Tong

By Zhao Hongyi

The Canadian Embassy launched the "Canadian Food Festival" at the China World Trade Center this week to expand choices in the local food market.

It is the first event of its kind held in the city. The embassy showcased 150 brands of food and drinks at the launch, including rapeseed oil, dried cranberries, soft nougat candies, natural glacial water, cookies, grape wines and maple syrups.

The embassy also presented aboriginal music and scenic pictures of Canada, which show the country's nature, culture and history.

The food festival, presented in 10 China Resources Vanguard Ole Hypermarkets in the city, will continue until January 16.

Statistics show China imported 24.2 million tons of processed food and 187,952 pints of drinks from Canada in 2007, amounting to 233.1 million yuan.

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Running a good way to explore Beijing

By Annie Wei

One chilly night, Luna Lin, a Taiwanese magazine editor, was in a cab with female friends on the way to dinner in Chongwen District. She gave the driver directions to the restaurant, which surprised the other women. How could she be familiar with an area where she has never lived or worked?

"Oh, I've run here before," she said.

Lin did it with Hash, a group that mixes running and beer drinking, organized in 1979 by some expats in town. But its wider history can be traced back to 1938 when some British and other foreign residents began meeting for runs in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The concept has spread worldwide, and in China, Hash can also be found in Tianjin, Qingdao and Chengdu.

According to the Beijing Hash Web site, the group runs every Sunday afternoon and everyone is welcome to join. Runs usually start at Tim's Texas Roadhouse in Nurenjie, Chaoyang District at 2 pm, but can vary from noon to 4 pm, depending on the season and the route. Runs are 8 to 10 kilometers long and usually last an hour. People who do not want to run but want to mingle with the group can get to the destination by taxi. About 25 to 50 people show up each weekend.

Lin said she heard of Hash years ago when she was still living in Taipei, but had no interest in joining the community. She has been a regular participant in the Beijing group for over a year. A friend from the US and a Hash member suggested Lin try it as a way to see more of the city. At that time, Lin was always busy with work and had not seen many places in Beijing.



Hash members in a Beijing suburb

Photo by Wang Xinyu

Through Hash, Lin found her Sunday afternoons filled with exercise, making friends and getting to know the city more intimately.

"We've run wild parts of the Great Wall in different locations, some local neighborhoods, a lot of parks. The Beijing Olympic Forest Park is very nice with a real forest," she said. An unforgettable run was one day it was snowing in Dajuesi, or the Temple of Enlightenment, in Haidian District.

Lin said that her first six months with Hash was more about socializing. Her first few runs were exhausting and difficult to finish. "The sport got addictive until I got used to running," she said. She said she feels something is missing if she skips one run. She is also happy to see friends she

has met knew through the community.

"These friends from Hash feel like a big family to me now," she said.

Xiao Di, a Beijing restaurant manager, has been running with Hash for three years. He was introduced to the group by a friend and found it a great way to combine socializing and staying in shape. He organized a run around a hutong in Houhai not long ago.

"It was great fun," he said, "We started at Gulou, visited popular spots around Houhai, went hutong sight-seeing and stopped by some bars to have beer - People from Hash are very friendly, natural and spontaneous."

For more information, check out hash.cn.

Pub crawl comes to town



Santas at a Christmas Eve "pub crawl"

Photo provided by Kevin Shi

By Gan Tian

At least 20 blue Santa Clauses were seen on Silk Street, Sanlitun and Houhai on Christmas Eve, livening up the town's holiday celebration. The group was made up of clubbers who made an appearance at some of the city's most famous bar areas on board a rented bus.

Kevin Shi, an editor of *Metrozine Beijing* magazine, and his colleagues organized the "pub crawl." Many of their foreign friends invited them to hang out on Christmas Eve, so they came up with the idea of getting a big group together and visiting various clubs.

Network Club, which specializes in organizing expat activities, heard the news and suggested a tie-up with Shi so it could bring in its own members.

The plan reached its peak when Tiger Beer joined the effort. Tiger rented a bus for the group and provided free beer in the pubs.

More than 30 locals and foreigners signed up for the event - an evening of beer, music and dancing. The clubbers gathered on Silk Street, then made their way to Nanjie Pub in Sanlitun and Houhai's Tianshui Yinchu and Yinhaixuan bars.

Jessica Lewis, 24, from the US, went to

the party alone but made a lot of friends on the bus. She had a great time and "enjoyed three pubs in one night," she said.

The pub crawl welcomes expats, Shi said. "We know there are many expats who have stayed in Beijing for the festive season. Most of their friends have gone home for Christmas and they have no idea where to go," William Zhu, a representative from Tiger Beer, said. He said he wished the pub crawl could offer locals and expats a chance to meet more friends and a chance to discover more drinking spots they can visit during the holiday season.

Market for contemporary young artists

By Li Jing

An audiovisual party on Christmas Eve marked the opening of The mARkeT at Beijing Center for the Arts at Legation Quarter, where 60 young Chinese and foreign artists put their works on sale. Some artworks were created specifically for the event's theme, "New Year Gifts from 60 Young Artists."

The mARkeT, a new art marketing strategy, aims to be a platform for young artists to exhibit works, exchange ideas and receive valuable reviews. "We fund some artists so they could finally make plans come true and we are committed to raising money to support them," Jiang Yipeng, vice director of the gallery and curator of the exhibition, said.

Organizers of the market also encourage the artists to make their own decision on how and what to show, integrating them into the curatorial program. Most artists placed their works on the floor, which was covered with a bright-colored carpet.

Only one artwork was placed on the wall - Paula Tsai's "Reminiscences Temporality." The series of 12 ink and watercolor paintings on rice paper are about plant specimens that are flattened and dried. "I wish to display them on the wall with pins. The specimens represent reminiscences from nature, as well as a way for human being to preserve nature, to preserve things that are vulnerable to time," said Tsai, 26, a Chinese American, who is an exchange student at the Central Academy of Fine Arts.

She said it was her first time to exhibit her work at such a market. "In my hometown of New York, there are art markets along streets but they don't have as many high-end works as this one. In America, young artists seldom have a chance to show works in galleries."

At The mARkeT, all the art pieces are clearly priced and there are special discounts from 2 to 10 pm on January 4.

The gallery said they are continuously on the lookout for new talents and this kind of art market will be held regularly. The next one is planned for May 4.

Where: Beijing Center for the Arts at Legation Quarter, 23 Qianmen Dong Dajie, Chongwen District

When: Until January 4, daily 10 am - 10 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 6559 8008



Opening of The mARkeT

Photo provided by Jiang Yipeng

Skills in exchange for rent

By Zheng Lu

Since the cost of housing rental is continuing to fall, many landlords have come up with the idea of accepting payment in kind rather than leaving their apartments vacant.

On Ganji.com, a classified ads Web site, pages and pages of rent-free apartments – wanted and available – can be found.

Some landlords are offering a free room to those who can teach them network technology or foreign languages such as English and French. Others hope to learn cooking skills from their tenants, while those

with children are asking tenants to tutor students in English or Math.

Some anxious homeowners will take whatever is available. One who lives in Gaobeidian, Chaoyang District, said in her "room available" ad that "any skill you can offer will do." Another landlady residing in the CBD area, who is going back to her hometown for the Spring Festival, only wished for someone who can take care of her house while she is away. During the holiday, many people will be leaving the city, so she thinks only free rent can tempt someone enough to

look after her place.

Those looking for free accommodation display more creativity than people can imagine. There is the magician promising to teach magic tricks – a lesson worth at least hundreds of yuan in a magic club. Others are offering to teach yoga, how to play an ethnic musical instrument or knowledge in the areas of marketing, psychology and nutrition.

Among skills wanted in a tenant, a foreign language is the most popular, especially English. Many in the know say that native English-speakers are given top priority for rent-free lodging.

Aside from going online, free housing may also be found through agents. Hong Huanyan, an employee at the International Homestay China, a US-based company, said foreigners who seek free accommodation do so for two main reasons. One is to learn Chinese and the other is to experience the way that average Chinese people live. The host family and its guest will give each other language lessons every day.

Most foreigners choose to stay with a family that can offer them their own room and bathroom and access to the Internet.

Learn Peking-opera pieces

By Gan Tian

After Chen Kaige's *Forever Enthralled* made its debut at the beginning of December, Peking Opera experienced a revival among the younger generation. Fans who are interested in becoming part of such performances now have their chance.

Ruifu Xiyuan

This Peking opera house is working together with Yugong Yishan nightclub to make this happen. "It is funny to see a traditional art form in such a modern place," Lei Ruishui, 24, a fan of Peking Opera, said.

The 3-hour gathering is held every Sunday, in which attendees take the stage and sing several pieces for the first hour and a half. About 20 people get a chance to participate. For the rest of the afternoon, six to seven professional actors perform on stage.

Ruifu Xiyuan has also invited some of the top performers to give beginners tips on the ancient art. The following people are invited on January 13: Yao Zongru of the Beijing Peking Opera House; Liu Mianzong, a professor from the National Academy of Chinese Theater Arts; and Li Xiaojie, a popular *qingyi*-character player.

At the gathering, novices can pick up lines from famous



The complicated makeup process is considered part of the Peking Opera art.

CFP Photo

pieces such as *Bawang Bieji* and *Guifei Zuijiu*.

Where: Yugong Yishan, 3 Zhangzhihong Lu, Dongcheng District

When: Every Sunday, 2-5 pm
Admission: 10 yuan per person

Tel: 6404 2711

Dongcheng Wenhuaquan

Dongcheng Wenhuaquan, the culture museum in Dongcheng, acting like an events organizer, also has a similar group that

meets every Saturday.

Where: 111 Jiadaokou Dong Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: Every Saturday, 2-5 pm
Admission: 5 yuan per person
Tel: 6402 1875

Yikatong cards used to buy condom

By Zhang Dongya

Condom vending machines can be found in thousands of public places including hotels, restaurants, entertainment venues, bathhouses and construction sites. Condoms from the machines are available for 5 yuan each, but payment can only be made through a Yikatong card, issued by the Beijing Municipal Administration and Communications.

Each machine contains 46 individually packaged condoms made by Jissbon, a local company. The vending machines are also attached with a TV set that plays programs on AIDS prevention.

The project is being managed by the Community AIDS Prevention Committee, which is working to prevent the spread of the disease. All city districts and counties will be equipped with condom vending machines for free.

According to a report at the committee's media conference in December, their AIDS-prevention program encompasses as many as 6,300 public venues. Among them, some 2,100 have already formally agreed to receive the condom vending machines. So far, more than 600 public venues have been installed with the machines.

The committee's spokesman, Zhang Weifeng, said some government organizations and enterprises have applied to participate in the program and it is considering adding these institutions to the system to more effectively spread AIDS prevention.

There will be specially-assigned employees within the committee to maintain and repair the machines.

"Most vending machines are set indoors, and we will choose places that don't easily get wet



The condom vending machines have TV sets that play AIDS-related programs.

Photo provided by Community AIDS Prevention Committee

or dusty," Zhang said. "For the construction sites, we will choose places that are well-supervised and taken care of to ensure people can get safe and sanitary products."

The committee said they

chose the local brand Jissbon, which has a good reputation in the local market, to guarantee high-quality products.

For inquiries, customers can call 8599 9961, the number indicated on each machine.

ASK Beijing Today

Email your questions to: weiyang@ynet.com

I want to go to a Traditional Chinese Medicine clinic where locals go. Any recommendations?

You can try Tongrentang. It is a pharmaceutical company founded in 1669 and the largest producer of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) with 1,000 kinds of medicines. Its TCM clinic, which offers therapy, will open from January 1.

Address: 46 Xidamocang, Qianmen, Chongwen District
Hours: Daily 8 am – 5 pm
Tel: 6701 9022

I have January and February off and I'm trying to decide what to do. Last winter, I went to Tibet and Yunnan. It was terrific, but I want to see something new. How about Hainan, Sichuan, Harbin or Gansu?

If you are not afraid of the cold, places in the north, like Harbin, are great for skiing. Gansu is also colder than Beijing. Hainan has warm weather and nice beaches that have spas. Sichuan is also a nice place to hang out, popular for its low-cost leisure activities and delicious cuisine.

Does anyone know a shop in or Dongcheng District that does high-quality photo printing? I'm looking to print from digital media onto Fuji crystal archive paper.

There is a camera equipment store in Dongcheng District called Wenhua Zhaoxiang Qicai, near Sanlian Bookstore. It is well-known for high-quality photo printing.

Where: Gen 65, Meisuguan Hou Jie, Dongcheng District
Tel: 6401 0398

Do you know where I can buy a good sewing machine?

Carrefour has a couple of models, which you can check out online at carrefour.com.cn. You can also try Taobao.com, which offers sewing machines at various price ranges.

A friend is planning to come to Beijing short-term and wants to rent an apartment in which the landlord can issue an official *fapiao*. Can he easily get this from any landlord? What problems might he encounter?

The landlord has to go to the tax office with a copy of the lease contract and an ID card. He or she has to fill in a form and pay 5 percent of the invoice amount, or income tax, to get a *fapiao*. Some landlords might refuse to do this because they do not want to pay the tax. Your friend's best bet is to see if the landlord will issue a *fapiao* before he signs a tenancy agreement.

(By Wei Ying)

Simple, practical

New German designers destabilize the familiar

By He Jianwei

"Deutscher Werkbund (German Work Federation)," "Bauhaus," "International Style," "Functionalism School" and "Less is more," all these words related to architecture and design reflect the prosperity of German design in the 20th century. The pioneering masters of modern architecture such as Walter Gropius (1883-1969) and Ludwig Mies Van der Rohe (1886-1969) devoted themselves to connecting technology with art in the industrial age.

After the Bauhaus period (1919-1933), German designers abandoned traditional aesthetics and focused on function. Most works were practical but dull.

Now, in the information age, new German designers have inherited their tradition of functionalism but are combining it with the best of their imaginations.

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The 706 Loft, a Bauhaus building in 798 Art District, was decorated like a shopping mall for the exhibition. Ten young designers from Germany brought their fashion and product and space designs as an example of the modern German design industry.

"The difference between designs and exhibits is that the viewer approach is from the eye of the consumer within the space we provide. It allows designers to realize their real value," Liu Zhizhi, the curator, said.

During the 1990s, shortly after East and West Germany were reunited, an enormously tolerant and culturally pluralistic new Germany enhanced itself. Any kind of cultural stance or notion was quickly discarded to carve out its own niche.

The designers exhibited here and their works are samples from the period of "cultural profusion." Their works not only "provoke" accepted design norms, but these designers hope to use their works to destabilize familiar lifestyle modes.

One present design duo, BLESS, is regarded among the young designers as Europe's artistic vanguard. Ines Kaag and Desirée Heiss formed the design duo in 1997. They were famous for artsy fashion – such as shoes the buyer has to assemble and bags that are nothing more than a piece of leather with two safety pins.

Combining the fashion, art and architecture design techniques, the pair makes simple and comfortable products from the user's perspective. From functionalism to abstract art, BLESS focuses on freedom in modern design.

In this exhibition, they brought a pair of shoes that are a combination of sock and shoe.

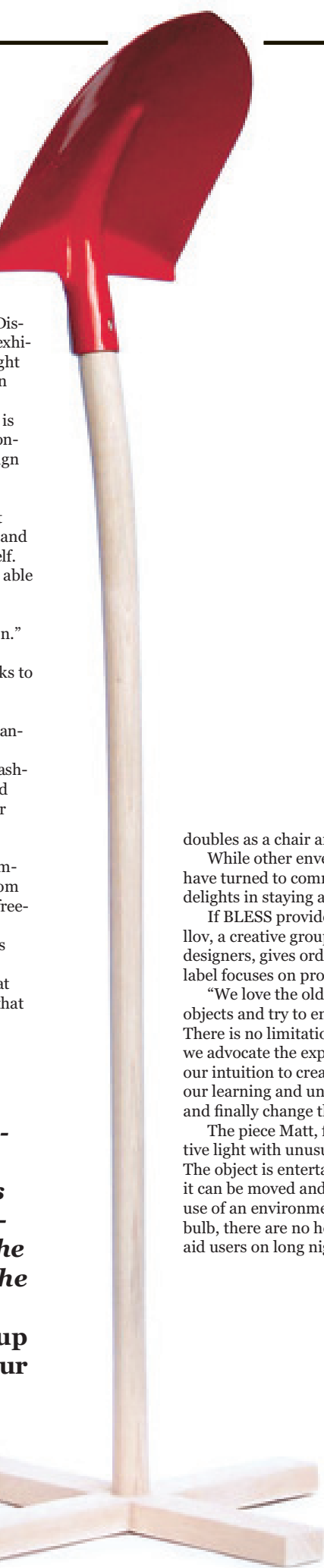
They also designed a line of interior goods that included embroidered plants, a vacuum cleaner t

"There is no limitation in our design concept and we advocate the experimental spirit. We rely on our intuition to create products which can reflect our learning and understanding of the world, and finally change the world."

– Iltot Ilov, a creative group founded in 2006 by fo



and humorous



doubles as a chair and beaded power cables.

While other envelope-pushing design units have turned to commercially viable work, BLESS delights in staying as strange as its roots.

If BLESS provides practical objects, then llot llov, a creative group founded in 2006 by four designers, gives ordinary objects new life. The label focuses on product and interior design.

"We love the old, ordinary and common objects and try to endow them with new energy. There is no limitation in our design concept and we advocate the experimental spirit. We rely on our intuition to create products which can reflect our learning and understanding of the world, and finally change the world," llot llov said.

The piece Matt, for example, is a knit interactive light with unusual and great tactile qualities. The object is entertaining for the user, because it can be moved and played with. Through the use of an environmentally friendly energy saving bulb, there are no heat emissions and Matt can aid users on long nights of late-night reading.

A table that is missing two legs may seem doomed to fall, but the latest design studio Farsen | Schollhammer introduces more absurdism to German design field. Nina Farsen and Isabel Schollhammer collaborate on furniture, tableware, accessories, lighting and packaging projects.

In their three variations on their "Suppenkaspar" series, missing table legs are compensated for by weights fixed in the appropriate places. The weights are held by nearly invisible thin strings. These two-legged tables show an astonishingly high stability, but they are not safe for leaning on.

The first variation uses 10-kilogram ball weights. The asymmetrical distribution of the mass of the weights helps to keep the table in balance. The legs of the second version taper. Their base was minimized: its weights are shaped like plumb lines and barely reach the floor. The assumed damage of the table

makes for a special usage experience. Even though the table shows reliable stability and can be used just like an ordinary work or dining table, an elastic effect and torque can always be felt.

In a third version, the physical principle was carried to the extremes. The remaining legs of the table were cut in three parts and are merely held together by the tension of the weights.

Sebastian Schonheit's giant knitted carpet is another surprising work. The oversized knit work appears as if it originated in a giant world in the fairy tales. His carpet was hand-knit, but he used gigantic needles nearly as tall as a man.

The hand-knitted carpet not only represents the result itself but also the process of work as a performing art. "The knitting work is like a performance, which not only makes the carpet unique, but is a homage to traditional handicraft," he said.

The designers did not explain what the "300" in the title meant, but it may be the number of stitches achieved before collapsing of exhaustion. The consumer can continue knitting after he or she brings the carpet home.

The young designers not only brought imagination and a little humor into their designs, but also expanded the possibilities of the design world.

A Berlin fashion designer, Esther Perbandt, has developed two famous brands: Esther Perbandt for clothing and Esther Perbandt Bags & Pieces for accessories.

Perbandt loves black, white and very few colors. Her style is a contrast between female and male sides. She uses viscose, silk and cotton in her design. Her Garden collection illustrates her ideas about breath and freedom, and she draws on birds to represent freedom.

And Studio Proxy and Hellograph make simple and functional furniture. Whodunit is a piece of furniture made of chipboard and oiled cherry. The intersection gives insight into contemporary furniture construction.

1. Whodunit, by Studio Proxy and Hellograph

2. Matt, by llot llov

3. Bucky Bowl, by Peter Hils

4. 300 Knitted Carpet, by Sebastian Schonheit

5. Garden, by Esther Perbandt

6. Suppenkaspar, by Farsen | Schollhammer

7. Eram, by BLESS

8, 9. Summer 2007, by Hut Up Berlin

10. Stiller Gefahrte, by Olschewski

10.

Two Blocks East West

Where: 706 Loft, 798 Art District, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

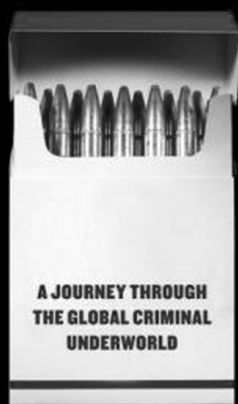
When: Until to February 20, except Monday, 11 am – 5 pm

Photos provided by Goethe-Institut China

Globalization in the underworld

Misha Glenny digs into great details of such crimes as Internet fraud, illegal energy and weapons deals, drug cartels, counterfeiting, prostitution, car-theft, immigrant smuggling and sturgeon poaching.

McMAFIA



Misha GLENNY

By Charles Zhu

As the global economy grows increasingly integrated and mutually dependent, so too does crime. Misha Glenny offers a rare glimpse into the underworld of arms sales, drugs, prostitution and human trafficking in *McMafia: A Journey Through the Global Criminal Underworld* (375pp, US \$27.95, Alfred A. Knopf).

This interesting book opens readers' eyes to many things that they did not know. Glenny, a former Central Europe correspondent for the BBC World Service, makes an exposition of Transnistria, a tiny breakaway republic from Moldova, a source of illegal arms from the former Soviet Army and two weapons factories. The author tells how the arms go from Transnistria via Odessa and into the battlefields in the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Middle East, western and central Africa.

With his masterful insight as a journalist, he digs into great details of such crimes as Internet fraud, illegal energy and weapons deals, drug cartels, counterfeiting, prostitution, car-theft, immigrant smuggling and sturgeon poaching.

All these global criminals try their best to take advantage of the loopholes in historical developments and seize all the wide opportunities for organized crime. For instance, the collapse of the Soviet Union cost thousands of government employees their jobs. "All manners of operatives lost their jobs: secret police, counterintelligence officers, special-forces commandos and border guards, as well as homicide detectives and traffic cops," Glenny said. Their skills in assassination, surveillance, net-

working and blackmail are essential to underground survival.

Another wonderful opportunity, Glenny says, is offered by the liberalizing of the financial and commercial markets that helps breed criminal syndicates. The playing field for globally-organized crime has widened with the penetration of the Internet into most homes. Glenny reports that today the shadow economy accounts for 15 to 20 percent of global economic activity.

In the book, Glenny describes a summit meeting in Aruba among the members of the Medellin and Cali cartels from Colombia, representatives from Moscow of the Solntsevo Brotherhood and Bulgarian traffickers and drug dealers from the Caribbean and Central America. The author also devotes much space to the delineation of criminal Nigerians. In one incident, a Nigerian mastermind who posed as the director of Nigeria's central bank tried to siphon off US \$242 million (1.65 billion yuan) from the private Brazilian bank of Banco Noroeste.

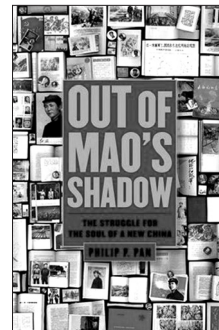
Gangs from the chaotic Balkans also come under the author's scrutiny. They smuggle anything from tax-free cigarettes to prostitutes through the "Highway of Shame" between Prague and Dresden. It is often a chain of crimes. Some women serve as sex slaves and recruit other women for a profit.

Glenny concludes that the illegality of labor smuggling lies in the illogicality of globalization. He thinks that a labor shortage and aging society in the European Union breed human trafficking. As people age, few are there to replenish the population so human trafficking thrives.

Bookworm book listing

Jenny Niven from the Bookworm recommends the following new arrivals to *Beijing Today* readers.

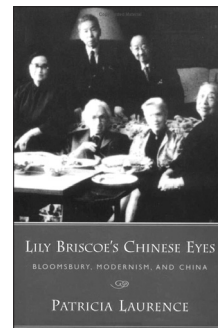
Out of Mao's Shadow: The Struggle for the Soul of a New China



By Philip P. Pan, 368pp, US \$28.00, Simon and Schuster

From an award-winning journalist for *The Washington Post* and one of the leading China correspondents of his generation comes an eloquent and vivid chronicle of a nation undergoing a remarkable transformation. From the factories in the industrial northeast to a tabloid newsroom in the booming south, from a small-town courtroom to the offices of the nation's wealthiest tycoons, he tells the gripping stories of ordinary men and women fighting to change their lives.

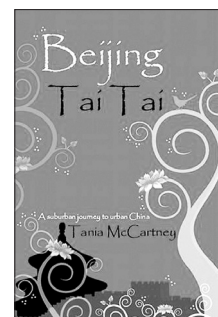
Lily Briscoe's Chinese Eyes: Bloomsbury, Modernism, and China



By Patricia Laurence, 440pp, US \$59.95, University of South Carolina Press

The book traces the romance of Julian Bell, nephew of Virginia Woolf, and Ling Shuhua, a writer and painter Bell met while teaching at Wuhan University in 1935. Relying on a wide selection of previously unpublished writings, Patricia Laurence places Ling, often referred to as the Chinese Katherine Mansfield, squarely in the Bloomsbury constellation. In doing so, she counters East-West polarities and suggests forms of understanding to inaugurate a new kind of cultural criticism and literary description.

Beijing Tai Tai



By Tania McCartney, 280pp, US \$23.99, City Weekend

The book is a selection of blogs and columns for City Weekend magazine, as well as a collection of newly published entries. Laugh and cry at this rollercoaster as a suburban Aussie mother attempts to assimilate her young family into Chinese life.

(By He Jianwei)

Lives anything but plain

By Zheng Lu

Books on animals – especially dogs – are not uncommon. But one that does not brag about how great or clever the dog is, and on the contrary devotes four out of five pages describing its ability to wreck everything, makes for a more interesting read.

The hero dog is too familiar a character: but only in movies. There is almost no chance for one's own dog to emulate the model. *Marley & Me* (by John Grogan, 343pp, Harper, US \$7.99) tells the tale of "the dog next door" in this true life of underdogs.

Marley is a typical energetic dog who never takes a break. He lives wild and true to his heart, and is ready to go at a moment's notice. Any interesting distraction makes him forget about his owner and his surroundings.

But having such a dog in public is no easy task for John Grogan and Jenny. Marley is a talented troublemaker who can turn any harmony into chaos. He startles everybody and embarrasses his owners.

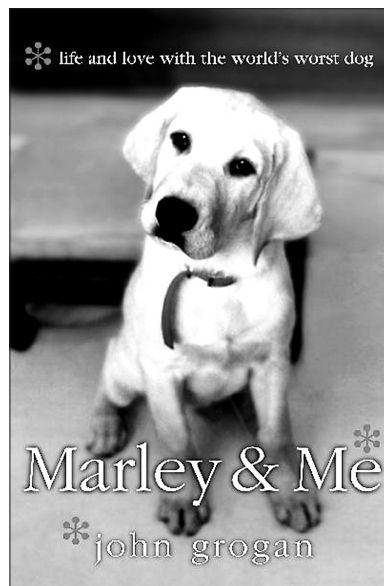
Even when locked in a portable kennel he licks open the lock to have fun till his owners return.

In a flashback, the reader sees how John and Marley's relationship began. When he brought the dog home he had dreams of it being best in show. But the dream is so far from reality that John would be content if the dog just caused less trouble.

While the book has no star, it is hardly dull. The author's humor pulls it along. He tells the tale with a calm, cool and self-mocking tone guaranteed to win laughs.

After reading the ups and downs of the dog and the Grogan family, the book becomes a struggle to finish. The reader knows there is only one way for it to end, and that is when Marley ends.

His stories with his family may remind readers of their own pets. A pet is a life-changing experience – they are entertainers and family members, much closer than friends. Even those who have never kept a dog will find *Marley & Me* hard to put down.



A new movie based on the book premiered on Christmas Day in the US, one year after the book's release. The movie has already set new box office records. Marley would certainly be happy to know how many new friends he has made.

By Wang Yu

Fashion runs in a circle and designers always look for new inspiration from bygone trends. But mainstream style is whorish and meaningless in its uniformity. Young people in China have been part of the fashion scene for a while, and they are quickly tiring of hip-hop kids.

However, there is a small group supporting another style new to China. In the late 1950s, British mod style never achieved success in other Western countries, but in China, it may become the savior of street fashion.

The British origin

The mod subculture originated in London and peaked in the mid-1960s. The term mod is derived from modernist and was used in the 1950s to describe modern jazz musicians and fans. As Britain was on its way to economic recovery after World War II, teenagers began to reject dull, timid, old-fashioned and uninspired British culture.

The sociologist Simon Firth asserted that the style has its roots in the 1950s beatnik coffee bar culture. The atmosphere also became an inspiration for the art school students of London's bohemian scene.

Increasing affluence occurred in post-war Britain. Young adults in the early 1960s did not have to contribute their money to family finances. Their income was disposable, and they began to buy stylish clothes. The mod fashion inherited the immaculate dandy look from the Teddy Boys subculture. Mods were chasing expensive suits – even a young mod would go without food to buy clothes.

Influenced by the French and Italian styles at that time were tailor-made suits with narrow lapels, thin ties, button-down collar shirts, pointed-toe leather shoes for male mods and the androgynous female look. Motorscooters became a symbol of the culture.



British Mod! invades China

Music opens doors for youth

Besides fashion, pop music is another important element of mod. At the beginning, soul, ska, British beat music and R&B were the scene favorites. Later, musicians like the Who, the Beatles and the Kinks helped spread mod. In the 1990s Brit-pop era, the style saw a renaissance with bands like Blur or the Verve.

"Music had a great impact on my lifestyle: the 1960s to 1970s British rock music bands who led me to the mod style," said Cherrygun, a student of the Beijing Contemporary Music Acad-

emy. Her brown hair and stylish dress with mixed colors attracted some fashion magazines.

Mod is like a big umbrella. It covers a variety of styles including punk, which was one of the most popular genres in China's underground rock and rock circle in the 1990s.

"Punk music helped promote mod style with local youth groups, but caused some misunderstandings because it was just a branch. Punk built the foundation of China's

mod culture," said Leslie Lee, who works for the Xinhua news agency. He first saw the term in foreign fashion magazines when he was in middle school.

After the punks, Brit-pop kind of music started to dominate a segment of the Chinese rock and roll scene when Sober released their first album "Great!?" in late 1997. The classical mod style of the members suddenly caught the fans' attention. Shen Lihui, lead vocalist of Sober, founded the most successful independent record label Modern Sky later on.

Another important mod promoter was Super VC, the fashion

icon of China's rock music. Their fans obsess over the brands its members wear to each performance.

"In 1999, I learned the 'mod' from music magazines like Q and NEM. Then I went to study at University of Westminster in London in 2004 and got a clear understanding of the style by talking to various musicians. People were led in their rock style by their outward appearance," said Sun Lingsheng, lead vocalist of the Super VC.

Good music never gives up its best collaborator, fashion. Most successful bands require stylish members to attract fans' attention. In the cover picture of their third album, "The Great Restoration," the four members of Super VC wear well-cut black suits with old fashioned haircuts as a tribute to the Beatles.

"Mod is a lifestyle: it requires self-discipline and good taste in clothing. I never go out before I pick up the right shirt," Sun said.

Photo provided by Cherrygun

Sun Lingsheng and his band the Super VC are also fashion idols.

Photo provided by Sun Lingsheng



Now and the future

Japanese fashion circles absorb Western styles and fuse them with their own aesthetics. Their focus on delicacy combines mod spirit with oriental roots – the result has been a hit with Chinese teenagers.

After 30 years of fast development, the post-80s youth are seeing the same affluence as the British mods.

Chasing good quality is the mod attitude towards not only clothes but also life. Besides buying new products in the chain stores, local mods also look for vintage apparel to complete their image.

"No high-heel shoes, basic colors, decent designs, 1960s-style cuts, sec-

ondhand clothes mixed with big brand products: that's my style," said Wu Qiong, an online shop owner who used to be a reporter. Her store sells vintage clothes imported from foreign countries. "I think the style may continue in small groups for a long time," she said.

"But a lot of people eagerly wear old clothes without any thought to selection. Some vintage clothes cannot connect with modern styles," Cherrygun said.

Ben Sherman, the British traditional mod brand, opened its first store on the Chinese mainland in December 2007 in Shanghai, and has since entered Beijing.

"Consumers between 25 to 35 years old are our target group. Now, 70 percent of the buyers are locals, and we expect the number to grow," said Joy Jiang, brand manager of Tristate Holdings: the agent of Ben Sherman.

The brand started looking for musicians – especially rock bands – as a brand spokesperson and Super VC was signed with no questions asked. It will hold a guitar pick exhibition next year.

"Mod style is rising in China and it will continue for a couple of years. I'm glad we can influence people beyond the reach of our music," Sun said.

Decors in the year of the OX

By Gan Tian

In Chinese astrology, 2009 is the Year of the Ox, which comes second in the sequence and recurs every 12 years. In the Vietnamese zodiac, the water buffalo occupies the position of the ox. To welcome the new lunar year, shoppers can decorate their homes with a variety of ox-themed decors.



Ox car decor

This ox is a bit twisted, but it still looks cute. The four Chinese characters on it say "collecting luck and fortune," which everyone hopes for every day of the year. If you think you are too poor for your car, why not get this charm. It may bring luck and money.

Available: B2, 77 Street, Xidan, Xicheng District
Price: 40 yuan

Ox-girl doll

If your girlfriend is born in the Year of the Ox, this will make an adorable present for her. The doll is 80 centimeters high – about half the height of some women.

Available: taobao.com
Price: 40-80 yuan



Hip-hop cow doll

The cow is wearing a pair of sunglasses and a big black coat, ready to hip-hop with the best of them. Why not play some Black Eyed Peas music in front of the doll and see whether it will come alive. It is not an ox, but to save money, you can always use a family member for that kind of work.

Available: G1, 77 Street, Xidan, Xicheng District
Price: 18 yuan



Hardworking ox

This glass sculpture is well-designed, but will not burn a hole through your wallet. Its golden color signifies fortune. It also looks like a "hardworking ox" or *kaituo niu*; the animal is poised as if plowing the field. Giving this to a friend means you are wishing him or her the best at work.

Where: lipin-bj.cn
Price: 3,300 yuan



Lalique glass buffalo

French glass designer Lalique has a hand-made glass buffalo ornament from the company's international headquarters in Paris. Last year, Lalique created the "Chinese Mood" special collection, which was an instant hit among its Chinese customers. A limited edition buffalo comes in gold.

Available: F1, South Tower, Parkson Shopping Mall, 101 Fuxingmen Nei Dajie, Xicheng District
Price: US \$879 (6,004 yuan)

Photos provided by Lalique



Andox seals

There are five cute, white oxen in the box. At the bottom of each figurine, you can carve your name, logo, or favorite design to make an ink stamp. Whoever conceptualized this was really clever – adorability and functionality in one. It is designed to appeal to the young generation.

Available: B2, 77 Street, Xidan, Xicheng District
Price: 45 yuan per set

Egg-cellent dishes to welcome the New Year

By Gan Tian

"Merry Christmas" in Chinese is "shengdan kuaile," and "happy New Year" is "yuan-dan kuaile." Both greetings contain "dan," which is pronounced in the same way as "egg," so this sounds like an opportune time to celebrate eggs. On this occasion, *Beijing Today* hunts down the best egg dishes in town, and wishes readers a happy 2009.

Fried eggs with jasmine

Fried Eggs with Jasmine is a Yunnan dish served in a number of restaurants around town, but *Beijing Today* recommends going getting it from Zhongbalou Yunnan Restaurant.

Named after its address in Dong Sanlitun or Zhongbalou, the restaurant opened a second location in Zhongguancun. It specializes in Fried Eggs with Jasmine, which contains the flower transported by air from Yunnan Province.

Each of Zhongbalou's branches offers a different ambiance: The one in Zhongguancun has a romantic atmosphere, where diners can watch the setting sun

or gaze at the stars; the Sanlitun branch, meanwhile, has a dimly lit environment suitable for savoring peace and quiet.

Zhongbalou Sanlitun Branch

Open: 10 am – 10 pm

Where: Building 8, Dong Sanlitun, Chaoyang District

Tel: 6417 9395

Zhongbalou Zhongguancun Branch

Where: R17, Buxing Jie, Zhongguancun Plaza, Haidian District

Tel: 5172 1729



CFP Photo

Beef strip loin and eggs rice

The best egg rice always contains more egg white, which enhances the taste of freshly cooked rice. This dish is available at Ooodle Japanese restaurant, which serves selections of Japanese and other Asian noodles, simple Northern Chinese dishes and special takeout menu items. Ooodle offers customers eight types of set menus at an affordable 50 to 65 yuan, among them: Steamed Rice with Baked Mackerel, Korean Kimchi and Beef Sliced Hot Pot, Shrimp Fried Rice, Steamed

Rice with Scallop, Steamed Rice with Pork and Curry Sauce, and Pan-fried Chicken Legs and Marinated Eel Rice. But note that there is a 15 percent service charge added to the total bill.

Ooodle

Where: Park Plaza Beijing Wangfujing, 97

Jinbao Jie, Dongcheng District

Open: 10 am – 2 pm, 5:30-10pm

Tel: 8522 1999 ext 3622

Photo provided by Ooodle



No ordinary omelets

Those who are looking for an omelet fix can head out to Bloo Dining Restaurant. The flavor of its omelets is enhanced by adding minced parsley, minced onion or grated cheese. Shrimps or oysters are other variants, the latter scalded in liquor then breaded and cut into small pieces.

Omelets are sometimes served with gravy, but at Bloo, this is a no-no as the liquid makes

them become flat and heavy. Gravy monsters fear not for servers will provide it in a separate container.

Bloo Dining Restaurant

Where: Park Plaza Beijing Wangfujing, 97

Jinbao Jie, Dongcheng District

Open: 6:30 am – 11 pm

Tel: 8522 1999 ext 3623

Photo provided by Bloo



Breaking through the border of traditional Chinese painting

By Jackie Zhang

When Shenzhou-6 and Shenzhou-7 blasted off into space, few people knew that several artworks, chosen from all over the country, came along for the ride. Paintings by Lin Tianxing, a Hong Kong-based artist, made it into both spacecrafts. A week ago, Lin opened a gallery in town at the Beijing Diaoyutai Villa International Club. Named Tianxing Caimo, which means "Tianxing's colorful paintings," it is Lin's fourth gallery and houses over 200 of his works.

Lin decided to become a painter at age 13. He liked to take walks in the forest, lie on boulders and watch the clouds and listen to the wind. "I like nature and



wanted to paint it on a canvas. I've loved painting since childhood," he said.

He learned painting techniques from both Chinese and Western artists. Traditional Chinese painting focuses on the use of black and white colors, but he added other colors into his works, combining the Western-style use of color with the structure of Chinese painting.

Tibet and the lotus are two

of Lin's favorite subjects. He has visited Tibet three times and one of his works, Auspicious Day, was done in 2008 after his third visit to the region. The strong contrast of colors in the painting brings to mind a typical picture of Tibet – blue sky, white clouds, spiritual people, red temples, yellow curtains and golden Buddhas.

"I like to draw inspiration from the different shapes and contrasting colors of things found in nature. For example, when I'm looking at a tree, I imagine different colors inspired by the tree,

but not the tree itself," Lin said. "It is easy to observe different things that can strengthen a painting's language."

Tianxing Caimo

Where: Building 1, Beijing Diaoyutai Villa International Club, 8 Xisanhuan Zhong Lu, Haidian District

When: Daily 8:30 am – 8:30 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 8802 8862

Upcoming

Movie

Wild China

This is a six-part documentary series featuring China's culture and history, co-produced by CCTV and the BBC.

Where: 43C, Beijing Keeven Aviation Instrument Company, 43 Beisanhuan Xi Lu, Haidian District

When: January 6, 7:30 pm

Admission: 10 yuan

Tel: 8211 5288

Friday, January 2

5

Exhibition

Art of Collotype



This exhibition reveals the extraordinary quality and scope of collotype printing – a process that

employs a glass plate with a gelatin surface that carries the image to be reproduced and is one of the first photomechanical printing processes invented.

Where: New Millennium Gallery, 3818 Warehouse, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until February 6, daily 10:30 am – 6 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 6432 4122

Hand and Breath – Mihel Mador

Solo Exhibition

Where: Zero Field Art Center, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until January 11, daily except Monday, 10:30 am – 6 pm

Admission: Free
Tel: 8456 5808

Pixel Fart – Yan Cong

Solo Exhibition

Where: Star Gallery, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until February 15, daily except Monday, 11 am – 6 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 8459 9631

Shooting

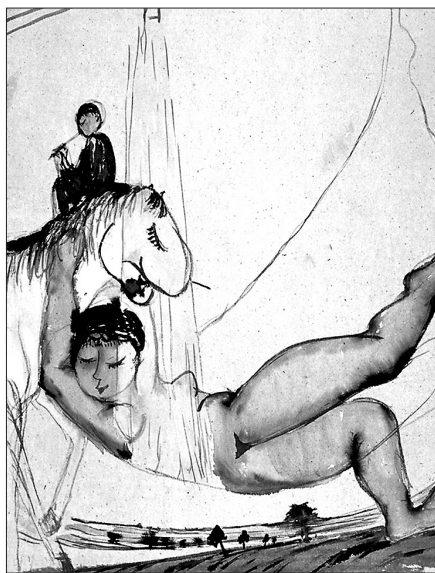
This is an exhibition to mark the gallery's first year anniversary.

Where: Han Ji Yun Contemporary Space, A1 Beigao, Cuigezhuang, Chaoyang District

When: Until March 7, daily 11 am – 7 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 6434 0266



Saturday, January 3

6

Exhibition

No 8 Place – Art and Academy

The exhibition showcases selected works by last year's PhD students at the Central Academy of Fine Arts.

Where: Room 203, Tower C, 6 Futong Dong Dajie, Chaoyang District

When: Until January 24, daily except Monday, 10 am – 6 pm

Admission: Free
New York Photographs 1983-1993 – Ai Weiwei
Solo Exhibition



This exhibition presents the artist's unpublished photographs,

chosen from a collection of over 10,000 photos that capture the history, culture and atmosphere of 1980s New York.

Where: Three Shadows Photography Art Centre, 155 Caochangdi, Chaoyang District

When: Until April 18, daily except Monday, 10 am – 6 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 6432 2663 ext 8008

Soliloquy – The Reconstruction of Art

Where: Shuimu Art Space, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until February 21, daily except Monday, 10 am – 6 pm

Admission: Free

Movie

Abre los ojos (Open your eyes)

Where: Instituto Cervantes in Beijing, A1 Gongti Nan Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 7 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 5879 9666

Nightlife

British Invasion

Where: Mao Live, 111 Gulou Dong Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: 9 pm

Admission: 50 yuan

Tel: 6417 7845

Sunday, January 4

7

Exhibition

Chinese Fatties – Zhang Jianjun

Solo Exhibition

In the series, all the "fatties" look the same and seem happy, an approach through which the artist shows that in this consumeristic age, people lose themselves by seeking endless comforts.

Where: Artist Village Gallery, 1 North of Renzhuang, Songzhuang, Tongzhou District

When: Until January 31, daily 8 am – midnight

Admission: 20 yuan

Tel: 6959 8343

Enjoy It? – Zhou Yinlun

Solo Exhibition

Where: Platform China, 319-1 East End Art Zone A, Caochangdi Village, Chaoyang District

When: Until January 18, daily except Monday, 11 am – 6 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 6432 0091

Ghosting – Li Qing

Solo Exhibition

The exhibition presents the painting series "Spot the Difference" and "Images of Mutual Undoing and Unity," as well as 30 films, installations and photographs that give viewers a deeper understanding of a new generation of Chinese artists who have tried to weave together concept and language.

Where: Iberia Center for Contemporary Art, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 7 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 6402 7961

When: Until January 18, daily except Monday, 10 am – 6 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 6543 2086

Movie

Bay of Angels

Where: French Culture Center, 1/F, Guangcai International Mansion, 18 Gongti Xi Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 7:30 pm

Admission: 10-20 yuan

Tel: 6553 2627

Nightlife

Gypsy Jazz and French Waltzes

With guitars and accordions, local musicians Dan, Nico and Zoe entertain the audience with French waltzes and jazz standards.

Where: Vineyard Cafe, 31 Wudaoying Hutong, Dongcheng District

When: 7 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 6402 7961

Stage in February

Concert

Choral Concert for the Chinese Lantern Festival

Who: Spring Choir of Beijing
Where: Beijing Concert Hall, 1 Bei Xinhua Jie, Xicheng District

When: February 8, 7:30 pm

Admission: 80-880 yuan

Tel: 6605 7006

The Romantic Melody

Who: China Film Symphony Orchestra

Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nan Dajie, Chaoyang District

When: February 14, 7:30 pm

Admission: 100-1,711 yuan

Tel: 6501 1854

Love in Spring

Who: Choir of the China National Symphony Orchestra

Where: Beijing Concert Hall, 1 Bei Xinhua Jie, Xicheng District

When: February 14, 7:30 pm

Admission: 80-880 yuan

Tel: 6605 7006

Music Festival Opening Concert of the China Philharmonic Orchestra 2008-2009

Who: Conducted by Zhang Guoyong

Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nan Dajie, Chaoyang District

When: February 22, 7:30 pm

Admission: 50-680 yuan

Tel: 6501 1854

Dance

Gala Show

Who: The Little Birch Tree Song and Dance Troupe of Russia

Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nan Dajie, Chaoyang District

When: January 29-February 1, 7:30 pm

Admission: 80-1,280 yuan

Tel: 6501 1854

Opera

Grand New Epic Peking Opera: Red Cliff

Who: Directed by Shi Hongtu

Where: National Grand Theater Opera Hall (west side of the Great Hall of the People), Xicheng District

When: February 5-10, 7:30 pm

Admission: 80-600 yuan

Tel: 6655 0000

Beauty Xi Shi

Who: Wuxi Song and Dance Ensemble and Jiangsu Province's Ethnic Dance Ensemble

Where: National Grand Theater Opera Hall (west side of the Great Hall of the People), Xicheng District

When: February 12-14, 7:30 pm

Admission: 80-580 yuan

Tel: 6655 0000

A Sigh of Love

Who: Shanghai Ballet Company

Where: National Grand Theater Opera Hall (west side of the Great Hall of the People), Xicheng District

When: February 18-20, 7:30 pm

Admission: 80-500 yuan

Tel: 6655 0000

White-haired Girl

Who: Shanghai Ballet

Where: National Grand Theater Opera Hall (west side of the Great Hall of the People), Xicheng District

When: February 21-22, 7:30 pm

Admission: 80-500 yuan

Tel: 6655 0000

(By Li Jing)

Dangerous ways to lose weight

"It is extremely unhealthy and could end very badly if attempted," Dr. Du Guoling, from Beijing Doctor Du Plastic Surgery Hospital, said.

"It won't make you gain weight, and you will lose weight doing this. The food you just ate is gone from your stomach, and with it all the essential nutrition," Du said.

Some people habitually vomit after eating to lose weight, which over time can develop into anorexia nervosa.

She said it also causes the following complications:

1 Dehydration: Excessive vomiting causes the body to lose water quickly. This can also lead to an imbalance in electrolytes, the important salts needed to keep the body working properly. In severe cases, hospital treatment is required.

2 Injury to the esophagus: The stomach acid that comes up with vomit can damage the tube that connects the mouth and stomach (esophagus). Sometimes the esophagus becomes so irritated it bleeds.

3 Tooth decay: The acid in vomit can erode tooth enamel.

4 Nutrients shortage: You will become very lazy and tired since you are not getting the nutrients you need, because by vomiting you are also getting rid of the vitamins, minerals, fiber and sugars, thus netting less energy and making yourself unhealthier.

"If you do this constantly it can lead to severe complications, even death," Du said.

Other seasonal health problems

Each year the emergency room is flooded by people seeking care for holiday mishaps. Consider the following to stay safe this year:

Beware of booze. If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation. Always have a designated driver.

Unwrap responsibly. Be careful when opening gifts. Do not use a razor blade, if scissors will suffice.

Watch what you eat. Do not eat food that has been sitting out for a long time. Always cook food thoroughly and store it safely.

Hang lights with care. Use a proper-sized ladder when hanging decorations, and do not do it alone. Have another adult help, especially to hold the ladder.

Sled safely. Wear a helmet, choose a low-traffic area and avoid obstacles, including shrubs.

Detect carbon monoxide. Carbon monoxide, an odorless gas, kills people in winter when furnaces and heaters are on. Install detectors and check to make sure they are working. Clean out fireplaces and make sure fireplaces, heaters and stoves have proper ventilation.

Avoid overloading sockets. Do not cram the plugs from too many decorations into one electrical socket. Overload is a fire hazard and can cause electrical shock.

Beware of falling ornaments. Make sure all holiday decorations and Christmas trees are securely anchored and that young children cannot pull them over.

Remember the helmet. If your child is receiving a bike, skateboard or scooter for the holidays, do not forget to include a helmet and other safety gear.

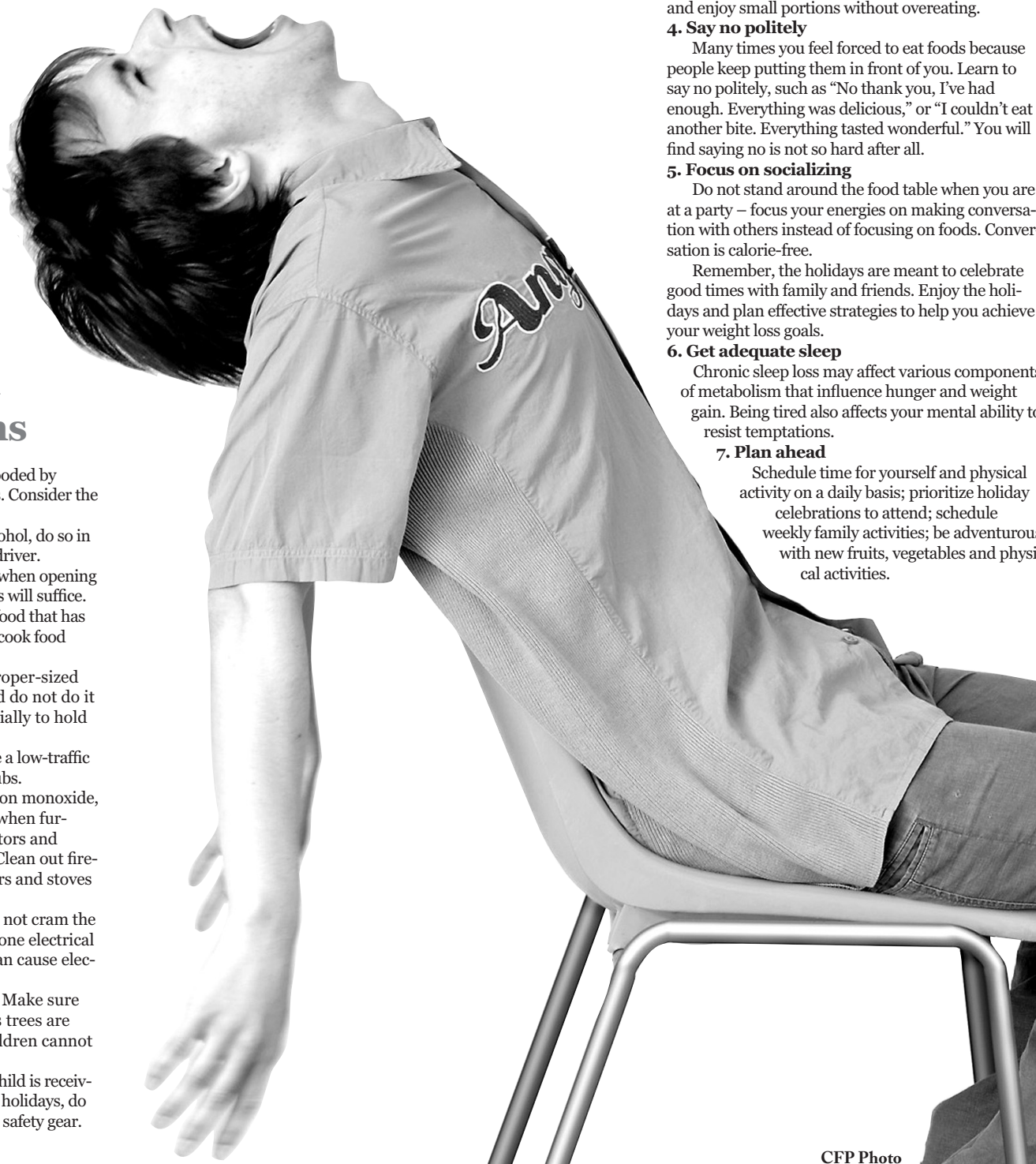
Celebrate the season safely

By Han Manman

Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's and Spring Festival come one after another. But for many people, the season of celebration is a tough time.

While the holidays are a time to rejoice, celebrate and share fond memories, they are also a time for endless parties, eating and drinking.

To maintain your weight or keep a clear head, many purge by vomiting after meals or drinks. However, doctors warn it is one of the most dangerous ways to lose weight.



CFP Photo

Managing the holiday pounds

How can you maintain your weight and heart-health during such a tempting time? Du has seven steps for surviving this seasonal ones to come.

1. Get moving

One of the most effective ways to maintain or lose body weight is to engage in regular, sustained aerobic activity. Aim for 200 minutes of aerobic activity per week. But any length of time is still better than no time at all.

2. Limit to one-a-day

While you cannot control every situation, you can control how much food goes into your mouth. You can prevent overeating and weight gain even when constantly bombarded with holiday parties and displays of desserts or candies. One trick is the one-a-day method.

Allow yourself one small serving of a cookie or piece of candy each day during the holiday season. Remember that you may have to compensate for it later in the day by reducing your total caloric intake or by burning a few extra calories while exercising. If you are not confronted with holiday foods that day, just skip your one-a-day – but do not compensate and double-up on your serving the next day.

3. Never go to a party hungry

One of the worst things you can do is skip eating all day to 'save up' for a binge. Have a nutritious snack like a low-fat trail mix, a piece of fruit, sliced vegetables, yogurt, whole grain crackers with peanut butter or even a glass of skim milk before the party. This way you will be satisfied when entering the party and enjoy small portions without overeating.

4. Say no politely

Many times you feel forced to eat foods because people keep putting them in front of you. Learn to say no politely, such as "No thank you, I've had enough. Everything was delicious," or "I couldn't eat another bite. Everything tasted wonderful." You will find saying no is not so hard after all.

5. Focus on socializing

Do not stand around the food table when you are at a party – focus your energies on making conversation with others instead of focusing on foods. Conversation is calorie-free.

Remember, the holidays are meant to celebrate good times with family and friends. Enjoy the holidays and plan effective strategies to help you achieve your weight loss goals.

6. Get adequate sleep

Chronic sleep loss may affect various components of metabolism that influence hunger and weight gain. Being tired also affects your mental ability to resist temptations.

7. Plan ahead

Schedule time for yourself and physical activity on a daily basis; prioritize holiday celebrations to attend; schedule weekly family activities; be adventurous with new fruits, vegetables and physical activities.

A door into ancient China



The hall in Zhongshan Huiguan before and after renovation.

The birth of huiguan

In ancient China, especially in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), huiguan were established by regional organizations in different areas of the country as places where merchants and officials from the same locale or same dialect groups could obtain food, shelter and assistance while away from home. Some may have served as gathering and entertainment places for professionals from related fields.

In 1415, the location for the imperial examination, or *keju kaoshi*, was transferred from Nanjing to Beijing. Examinees from all over the country flocked here and people had a problem finding food and lodging. Then, some wealthy people bought courtyards and opened them to examinees from their hometowns, and the huiguan was born.

"In these people's eyes, huiguan was their hometowns in Beijing," Bai said. "When they entered the

huiguan, they felt like they were at home. They could communicate in their own dialect and have the food they would eat at home." Bai said most huiguan can be found in Chongwen and Xuanwu Districts because locations for the 1415 imperial examination were in those areas. Money to operate the huiguan was donated by rich people and officials from the towns.

Besides huiguan for examinees, there were also huiguan for different industries, for businessmen and for funerals and interments. "Huiguan for funeral and burials were the most humanized," Bai said. "Many people from other regions died in Beijing. Their families didn't have money to transport the bodies back home, so the bodies were kept in a huiguan. A piece of land near it was usually used for burial. The dead were buried there as if they were buried in their hometown."

The current situation

In 1905, the imperial examination system was abandoned, so examinees no longer had a need for huiguan. But there were many huiguan used for business, so local governments decided to make them the seat of chambers of commerce, in which daily business affairs were conducted. In 1928, the capital of Minguo or the Republic of China was transferred from Beijing to Nanjing. Officials and the wealthy moved to

Nanjing as well. Huiguan lost their funding and fell into disrepair.

"Huiguan reputable in ancient times have been turned into protected cultural relics. But most have been made into residences, storehouses, schools and workplaces. In short, the original look of the huiguan is gone. But you can still see their architecture," Bai said. "It is strange yet interesting to look at the remains of huiguan and recall the past."

By Jackie Zhang

In some hutong in Xuanwu and Chongwen Districts, people can still see many courtyards with a stele hanging above the gate, telling people the courtyard used to be a *huiguan* of various regional organizations.

Bai Hequn, 63, was the first to visit all the huiguan in Beijing in the early 1960s and is regarded as an expert on the subject. In 1994, he published his first book on Beijing's huiguan. Last year, he revisited the city's remaining huiguan. "At present, over 10 huiguan remain in the hutongs, most of which are residences or transformed into schools or workplaces," Bai said.



A glance at the Pingyao Huiguan opera stage in the courtyard, which is residence now.

Where to visit

Zhongshan Huiguan

The Zhongshan Huiguan, built by the citizens of Xiangshan County in Guangdong Province, is located at Zhuchao Jie in Xuanwu District.

The street is actually a short hutong lined with several huiguan. Zhongshan Huiguan, which used to be called Xiangshan Huiguan, was built in a large plot of land. It contains three courtyards. "Records say that in the Qing, it used to be a place for mourning and for storing dead bodies. But in 1879, the mourn-

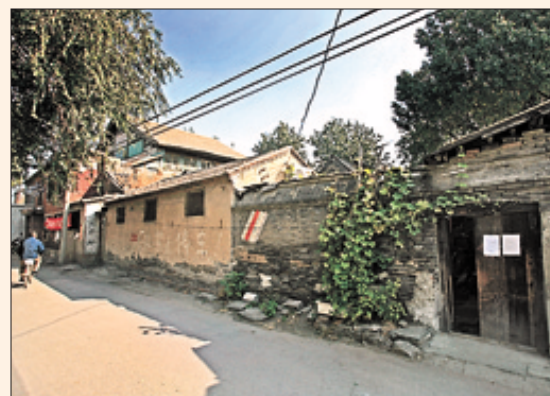
ing rituals were moved to another place and the huiguan was built there," Bai said.

In 1925, when Sun Yat-sen died, his birthplace of Xiangshan County was renamed Zhongshan. The huiguan followed the name change.

The huiguan's old architecture remains and it is listed as a protected cultural relics site.

Getting there:

Take Bus 102 and 105 and get off at Hufangqiao Stop, which is next to Huguang Huiguan.



The opera stage in Pingyao Huiguan seen from the outside.

Pingyao Huiguan

Pingyao Huiguan, in Chongwen District, served as a business huiguan for people from Pingyao, Shanxi Province. The stele on its gate says its date of construction is unknown, but that it was renovated in 1741 and 1819.

It used to be called Pingyao Yanliao, or paint, since it was established by businessmen selling paint

and wood oil. The huiguan consists of halls, opera stages and 23 rooms.

The huiguan is now surrounded by homes, but visitors can still drop by to see the once-famous huiguan.

Getting there:

Pingyao Huiguan is on the west side of Mishi Hutong. Take Bus 102, 105 or 109 and get off at Cai-shikou Stop.

Shaoxing Huiguan

Shaoxing Huiguan, built by the people of Shaoxing, Zhejiang Province, used to be called Shanhui after Shanyin and Huiji Counties. When the two counties were merged into Shaoxing Country, the name of the huiguan in Xuanwu District changed too.

One of Shaoxing's natives, the writer and intellectual Lu Xun, lived there when he first came to Beijing in 1912. At that time, he was still known by his real name Zhou Shuren.

For four years, Lu resided in Tenghua Guan, on the huiguan's northwest side. Then, he moved to Bushu Shuwu on its southwest. The years he lived in the Shaoxing Huiguan were turbulent times: Sun Yat-sen's Second Revolution failed and Yuan Shikai named himself the country's emperor.

Lu was disappointed by events around him and wrote epigraphs and read books on Buddhism to kill time. As a response to suggestions by friends, he began writing articles and novels. *Kuang Ren Ri Ji* (Lunatic's Diary) and *Yao* (Medicine) were written at the Shaoxing Huiguan and he soon became known by his pen name.

Caishikou, the execution ground during the Qing Dynasty, was not far from Shaoxing Huiguan. Members of the revolutionary group Wuxu Bianfa, a reform movement in 1898, were killed there. Lu wrote *Yao* to commemorate the revolutionaries, the young people who sacrificed their lives for the revolution and to satirize the government and society's blindness.

Lu moved to Xicheng District with his family in 1919 and left the huiguan where he had lived for seven and a half years. From the time he left his hometown at the age of 18 to the time of his death at 56, Shaoxing Huiguan was where Lu lived the longest.

The huiguan has been turned into a residential area and most of its architecture has been reconstructed. One of the houses, Tenghua Guan, is gone, but Bushu Shuwu still stands.

Getting there:

Take Bus 6, 50, 53, 102 or 105 and get off at Caishikou Stop. The huiguan is in Nanban Jie Hutong.



The gate of Shaoxing Huiguan

Huguang Huiguan

At the southwest corner of the Hufangqiao crossing in Xuanwu District, there is a building with a grand Qing Dynasty-style architecture. It is the opera stage in Huguang Huiguan, one of the most famous huiguan in the city.

Huguang referred to Hubei and Hunan Provinces in ancient times. Their huiguan was constructed in Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). At that time, people from both provinces lived there and had regular parties whenever they were in town.

Many famous personalities lived there. The revolutionary Sun Yat-sen stayed there five times, and it was where he hosted the conference to announce the establishment of the Nationalist Party or Kuomintang. Renowned Peking Opera actors like Tan Xinpei and Chen Delin performed on its opera stage.

The huiguan was confirmed a Beijing cultural relic in 1984. Two years later, it began renovations that took 10 years to complete.

The huiguan was opened to the public in May 1996 as the Beijing Museum of Traditional Opera.

Every night, there are



The courtyard and Huairenguan Hall in Huguang Huiguan.

opera performances in the huiguan. The lyrics are subtitled in Chinese and translated in English and Japanese.

Ziwo Jing or the Mid-noon Well in front of the huiguan draws many visitors. A story says that the water in the well is sweet at mid-noon and bitter at other times of the day.

Getting there:

Take Bus 102 and 105 and get off at Hufangqiao Stop.

Other Huiguan:

Liuyang Huiguan (Hunan Province)

Getting there: It is located in Beibanjie Hutong, Xuanwu District. Take Bus 109 and get off at Caishikou Stop.

Nanhai Huiguan (Nanhai, Guangdong Province)

Getting there: It is located on the west side of Mishi Hutong, Xuanwu District. Take Bus 102, 105 or 109 and get off at Caishikou Stop.

Wenxi Huiguan (Shanxi Province)

Getting there: It is next to Nanhai Huiguan. Take Bus 102, 105 or 109 and get off at Caishikou Stop.

Taiwan Huiguan (Taiwan)

Getting there: It is located at 114 Dajiang Hutong, Chongwen District. Take Bus 110 or 120 and get off at Dashilan Stop.

Puyang Huiguan (Fujian Province)

Getting there: Take Bus 102 or 105 and get off at Guozixiang stop. It is located at 19 Jiajia Hutong, Xuanwu District.

Hunan Huiguan (Hunan Province)

Getting there: It is at the west end of Beibanjie Hutong, Xuanwu District. Take Bus 109 and get off at Jiaozhi Hutong Stop.

Anhui Huiguan (Anhui Province)

Getting there: Take Bus 25 and get off at Liulichang Stop. It is on the north side of Housun Gongyuan Lu.

Tingzhou Beiguan (Eight counties in Fujian Province: Changting, Ningbei, Qingliu, Guihua, Liancheng, Shanghang, Wuping and Yongding)

Getting there: Take Bus 59 and get off at Dashilan Stop.

Shandong Huiguan (Shandong Province)

Getting there: Take Bus 112, 118 and get off at Hujialou Stop. It is at the northeast corner of the Hujialou Nan Li crossing.



The facade of the Huguang Huiguan
Photos by Li Yan and Guo Yongping

Dining

Danieli's Restaurant

Indulge in the new Danieli's Canarino Lunch with a taste of four different pastas from over 15 shapes and 15 sauces, accompanied by a daily appetizer, dessert and Italy's favorite winter mix of fresh lemon-infused tea – the famous Canarino.

Where: Danieli's Restaurant, The St. Regis Beijing, 21 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang District

When: from January 19 except Saturday and Sunday, 11:30 am – 2 pm

Cost: 85 yuan net

Tel: 6460 6688 ext 2441 or 2442

Agua Valentine's Experience

With Valentine's Day approaching, Agua is presenting its special menu early. The dishes include truffled mashed potato cone, goose liver served with Melba toasts, salmon mousse with fennel touch, avocado and shrimp tartar with horseradish sauce, sea bass served with durum and urchin sauce, traditional crispy suckling pig with shallots and potatoes, Valentine's dessert platter and petit fours with coffee or tea.

Where: Agua Spanish Restaurant, Legation Quarter, 23 Qianmen Dong Dajie, Dongcheng District

Cost: 398 yuan (subject to a 10 percent surcharge)

Tel: 6559 6266

High Tea

Gather all your circles in The Library's cozy lounge. The atmosphere is complete with a roaring fireplace and stunning city views and enjoy a buffer of sweet and

savory finger food and take on a dip in its chocolate fountain fondue.

Where: The Library, Hilton Beijing Wangfujing, 8 Wangfujing Dong Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: 3-6 pm

Cost: 88 yuan (subject to 15 percent service charge)

Tel: 5812 8888 ext 8411

Pu'er Tea

Pu'er tea is often compared to fine wine, appreciated for its subtle flavors and its ability to improve with age. Loved not only for its delicate, earthy taste, it is also associated with many health benefits, such as weight loss and the prevention of cancer. Experience this unique tea as Shangri-La Hotel's tea master presents a daily Pu'er Tea show, taking you step by step through its history, varieties and brewing processes.

Where: Lobby Lounge, Shangri-La Hotel Beijing, 29 Zizhuyuan Lu, Haidian District

When: 2-4 pm

Tel: 8882 6723

Business Lunch Buffet

Indulge the senses with a classic buffet menu served with a soft drink.

Where: CBD International Restaurant, Grand Millennium Hotel, 7 Dongsanhuan Zhong Lu, Chaoyang District

When: January 1-31 except weekends, 11:30 am – 2:30pm

Cost: 98 yuan (subject to a 15 percent surcharge)

Tel: 6530 9383



Chinese New Year Family Reunion Dinner

Chinese New Year's Eve is a time of family reunion and feasting. At Yao Chi, you can enjoy a special set menu that includes one bottle of red wine and one lucky draw coupon to win a weekend stay at the Grand Millennium Beijing.

Where: Yao Chi Cantonese Restaurant, Grand Millennium Beijing, 7 Dongsanhuan Zhong Lu, Chaoyang District

When: January 25 – February 9

Cost: 588 yuan (subject to 15 percent surcharge per person and minimum eight persons)

Tel: 6530 9383



Chic destination dining arrives in Beijing

This super-sleek four-in-one bar and restaurant concept was created by David Yeo of Aqua Restaurant Group. The multi-zone complex includes Shiro Matsu, a stunning contemporary Japanese restaurant; Hex, a sultry pre-dinner and late-night lounge bar; Agua, a stylish, upscale Spanish restaurant and tapas bar with a magnificent outdoor terrace; Fez, an expansive and chilled-out Marrakech-style rooftop bar and lounge with deep sofas and Moroccan lamps.

Where: Legation Quarter, 23 Qianmen Dong Dajie, Dongcheng District

Tel: 6559 6266

Exquisite coffees

Immerse yourself in a selection of rich and aromatic coffee encounters. This month, Shangri-La Hotel has gone all out with even more flavorful creations. Experience the to-die-for flavors of Mint Chocolate Coffee, Cafe au Lait, Cardamom Coffee, Orange Coffee, Hazelnut Coffee and Baileys Coffee.

Where: Lobby Lounge, Shangri-La Hotel Beijing, 29 Zizhuyuan Lu, Haidian District

Cost: 65 yuan (subject to 15 percent service charge)

Tel: 8882 6723



Aviation

Emirates introduces Boeing B777-200LR on Beijing route

Emirates introduces the Boeing 777-200LR for its Beijing route. The aircraft flies long distance and has next-generation private suites, 1,000 channels of on-demand entertainment, seatback SMS and email services, lie-flat seats in Business Class and more leg room for Economy Class passengers. The aircraft will operate

on flights EK306 and EM307, the twice daily flights between Beijing and Dubai.

To celebrate the launch, Emirates offers special fares on all flights departing Beijing until March 31. Economy class return fare from Beijing to Dubai starts from 5,260 yuan; other Middle East routes start from 5,480 yuan; Africa routes from 6,000 yuan; and Europe routes from 5,780 yuan.



Emirates brings its own double-decker to London

Emirates is bringing its own brand of double-decker to London with the arrival of its industry-leading A380. The new plane

will depart Dubai daily at 7:45 am and arrive in London Heathrow at 11:35 am. Passengers traveling from China can now try the super jumbo plane when transferring in Dubai for London.

Hotel

Pangu Presidential Suite

Pangu 7 Star Hotel Beijing offers a series of impeccable services for Presidential Suite guests, which include airport transfer with aerogate pickup and departure, limousine service around town for two hours per day, two breakfasts, complimentary in-room non-alcoholic drinks, free laundering, pressing and dry cleaning of two pieces of clothing per day per person (maximum two persons), meeting rooms in the business center for three hours per day and 1,000 yuan in dining credit at the Happiness ounge or Auspicious Garden.

Where: Pangu 7 Star Hotel Beijing, 27 Beisihuan Zhong Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Before March 31

Cost: 120,888 yuan (subject to a 15 percent surcharge)

Tel: 5906 7777

New General Manager takes over at JW Marriott Hotel Beijing

New General Manager Robert F. Fabiano takes over at JW Marriott Hotel Beijing. Fabiano began his career with Marriott 37 years ago in Massachusetts and was recently the General Manager of the Shanghai Marriott Hotel Hongqiao. The JW Marriott Hotel Beijing is his second senior position in Asia. He opened the JW Marriott Miami in 2002, as well as the Marriott Caesar Park Hotel Panama and the Rancho Las Palmas Resort in Palm Springs California.

Where: The JW Marriott Hotel Beijing, 83 Jianguo Lu, Chaoyang District

Tel: 5908 6688

Chinese New Year package

Celebrate Chinese New Year at The St. Regis Beijing. Its tailor-made celebration package offers all the pampering one can imagine. Included in the package are daily buffet breakfast, 500-yuan credit for 24-hour butler dining service,

courtesy pressing of up to five pieces of clothing upon arrival, free access to the skyline court, free access to 24-hour state-of-the-art gym and stunning indoor swimming pool with natural light.

Where: The St. Regis Beijing, 21 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang District

When: January 15 – February 15

Cost: from 1,888 yuan net (two-night minimum stay is required)

Tel: 6460 6688 ext 2321

Winter Meeting Package

Plan a meeting and enjoy service at The Great Wall Sheraton this winter. With its expansive function space, the hotel can accommodate 20 to 1,200 guests at events. The experienced service team will ensure everything is up to your expectations.

Where: The Great Wall Sheraton Hotel Beijing, 10 Dongsanhuan Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

Cost: from 450 yuan for half-day, 550 yuan for full-day (including meeting room rental, coffee or tea breaks and lunch)

Tel: 6590 5566 ext 2165

2008 World's Leading Lifestyle Hotel

Hot on the heels of its opening during the 2008 Beijing Olympics, Hilton Beijing Wangfujing was named the 2008 World's Leading Lifestyle Hotel by the World Travel Awards.

Hailed by the Wall Street Journal as the travel industry's equivalent of the Oscars, the World Travel Awards, established in 1993, reward and celebrate achievements in all sectors of the global travel industry. It is the most comprehensive and prestigious awards program in global travel today.

Where: Hilton Beijing Wangfujing, 8 Wangfujing Dong Dajie, Dongcheng District

Tel: 5812 8888

(By Sun Feng)

Chinglish story

This column focuses on Chinglish mistakes in our daily life. If you have any experiences to share, send them to Gan Tian at gantian@ynet.com.

What level are you on?

By Gan Tian

Jerry Mao, somebody I went to college with, has been a fashion victim as long as I have known him. He does not – and never did – have a lot of money, but has a thing for expensive, brand-name clothes.

A few days ago, I bumped into him at Shin Kong Place, a department store that houses many big international brands.

"Hey, long time no see. What are you doing here?" Jerry said, looking surprised to see me far away from my usual haunts.

"I'm visiting a cafe owned by a friend, and you?"

Jerry said he was on his way to the Gucci and Prada shops to look for new shirts.

"Oh come on, Jerry, won't you be happy with something cheaper?" I said, "Those fancy brands are for millionaires."

"Something cheaper? How would you define 'cheap'?"

"I think 400- or 500-yuan clothes would look as good on you," I said. "And they certainly aren't clothes you'd find at a garage sale."

"Never," Jerry said, looking insulted. "Those 400-yuan clothes are so low-level. They're not my style. I'm not like you. I want high-level things."

Because he insulted my prudence, I thought I would teach him a lesson by crushing his arrogance and pretentiousness.

"So you want things that are 'high-level,' huh?" I said.

"Yes, what's wrong with that? It's a sign of a good life."

"Yes, but one you'll never have," I said.

"What?" he said, a bit red in the face.

"First, I really don't see any difference in you whether you're wearing a Gucci, a Prada or something from the flea market," I said. "And second, 'high-level' means something involving people in important or powerful positions, for example, a high-level government official or a high-level meeting."

He looked like he was ready to wring my neck.

"I also know that 'high-level' can be used to describe highly radioactive nuclear waste that requires long-term storage and isolation. But I've never heard of it being used to describe clothes," I said smugly.

"You should use 'high-end.' High-end goods and services refer to those that are expensive and appeal to sophisticated and discerning customers," I said.

"I think you should first improve your English before you indulge in high-end stuff." With that, I turned around and walked away.

Blacklist

Beijing Today has come up with Blacklist, a column of words or phrases commonly misused by Chinese speakers. If you're planning to be an English teacher, reporter or employee of a multinational company, then this page is your new best friend. Watch out for it each week.

Local professor: Shida Zhu

1. Two days early

When you mean two days before the time you are speaking of, the expression should be in comparative form: It should be "two days earlier" and not "two days early." I also find that some beginners are prone to saying, "a decade late" when they mean a decade later than the reference point. Hence, it should be "a decade later."

2. The fear of the gods was why things are settled so quickly.

This is typical Chinglish: The writer is thinking in an entirely Chinese way. Readers can get an approximation of what the person is saying, but the word order is totally unidiomatic. The correct way to express this is, "The quick settlement of things is attributed to their fear of the gods" or "That things were settled so quickly is due to their fear of the gods."

Native speaker: Penny Turner

1. Two days early

These three words do not give enough information about what the writer means to say. If he or she is describing a situation that occurred or will occur two days before it is supposed to happen, then "two days early" is used correctly. An example would be, "Her birthday is on January 10, but she threw a party two days early so more friends could attend." But if the writer, talking from the present, is referring to two days ago, then "two days earlier" should be used. For example, "Two days earlier, she celebrated her birthday at a fancy Italian restaurant."

2. The fear of the gods was why things are settled so quickly.

I think this sentence's biggest drawback is its message, which may be alien to a lot of city people. But its grammar can be fixed without much difficulty, by writing it in the past tense: "Fear of the gods was why things were settled so quickly." The two sentences that Professor Zhu suggested are also correct variations.

Chinglish on the way

This column aims to identify Chinglish in public areas. If you see any Chinglish signs, please take a picture and send it to gantian@ynet.com together with your name and address.

Do not use the lift if it catches fire

By Tiffany Tan

What a thoughtful and practical sign. But of course, nobody should – and nobody in his or her right mind would – use a lift that is on fire! Nevertheless, English translations like this, which shout "common sense!" are very endearing.

It does not take much imagination to fix the sign, though. What it means to say is, "Do not use the lift in case of fire." But if you keep rereading, you can see where the writer made his mistake. If you substitute "it" with "building," things become clearer: "Do not use the lift if building catches fire."



CFP Photo

Movie of the week

The poster of *In Bruges* may mislead viewers to think this is a cop movie. While there are gun fights and extreme violence, Irish director Martin McDonagh also earns laughter and tears. If you like Guy Richie's *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, *In Bruges* may offer a similar experience.

Colin Farrell and Brendan Gleeson drive the story with their rapid-fire patter that reminds one of McDonagh's background as a playwright. And Ralph Fiennes gives the audience a surprise after they find his role as Farrell and Gleeson's boss Hurry.

Synopsis

For hit men Ray and Ken, Bruges could be their final destination or, at least one of theirs.

The pair is sent by their London boss Hurry to Bruges after a difficult job to cool their heels. During days in the storybook city, Ken finds his mind and soul being expanded by the beauty and serenity of Bruges while Ray is haunted by the bloodshed in London. The destinies of the hit men and all the wacky people they have met will change.



Scene 1

(Ray finished a job in London and receives instructions from his boss Harry to go to Bruges with Ken. The hit men check into a small hotel after they arrive.)

Ray (R): After I killed them, I dropped the gun in the Thames, washed the residue (1) off my

hands in the bathroom of a Burger King, and walked home to await instructions. Shortly thereafter, the instructions came through. "Get the fuck out of London, youse dumb fucks. Get to Bruges." I didn't even know where Bruges fucking was. It's in Belgium.

R: Bruges is a shithole.

Ken (K): Could we reserve judgment on Bruges until we've seen the fucking place?

K: I think you have a couple of rooms booked under Cranham and Blakely?

Marie (M): Yes ... No, we have one room booked. One twin room (2). Booked for two weeks.

R: Two weeks!

K: Do you have another room?

M: No, I'm afraid we're fully booked. With Christmas, everywhere is fully booked.

K: Okay.

Scene 2

(Ray kills a child in a church by mistake. He is trapped in self-accusation. Harry calls Ken and orders him to kill Ray.)

K: Hello?

Harry (H): Where the fuck were you yesterday? **K:** We just

popped out (3) for some dinner, Harry. We only popped out for half an hour.

H: Yeah? What'd you have?

K: For dinner?

H: Yeah.

K: Pizza, at Pizza Hut.

H: Was it nice?

K: Yeah, it was all right. I don't know. It was Pizza Hut. The same as in England.

H: Well, that's globalization, isn't it? Is Ray there with you?

K: He's in the toilet.

H: Can he hear?

K: No.

H: What's he doing?

K: What do you mean?

H: Is he doing a wee or a poo?

K: I don't know, Harry, the door's closed.

H: Send him out on an errand (4) for half an hour, but don't make it sound suspicious.

K: Yeah. He's gone.

H: What'd you say to him?

K: I said, "Why don't you go have a drink, you say you've been

cooped up (5)?"

H: What did he say?

K: He said, yeah, he would. And he might go have a look to see if there's a bowling alley around.

H: Sure he didn't mind?

K: No, he was glad to get out.

H: He's definitely gone?

K: Yeah, yeah, he slammed the door (6).

H: So, is he having a nice time, seeing all the canals and that? I had a lovely time when I was there. It's like a fairytale, isn't it, that place?

K: Yeah.

H: With the churches and that. They're Gothic.

K: Yeah.

H: So he's having a really nice time? I'm not sure if it's really his cup of tea (7). I'm glad we were able to give him something. Something good and happy. Because he wasn't a bad kid, was he?

K: Huh?

H: Listen, take down (8) this address. Raamstraat 17. There'll be a man there tomorrow morning at 9:00, his name's Yuri. He'll give you the gun. Ring me on the public phone at Jimmy Driscoll's about 3:00 or 4:00 tomorrow, after it's done.

K: After what's done?

H: Are you being sick?

K: No. Listen, I like Ray.

H: He was a good bloke (9), but when it all comes down to it, you know, he blew the head off a little fucking kid. And you brought him in, Ken. So if the buck don't stop with him (10), where does it stop?

Scene 3

(After receiving a call from Ken that Ray is alive, Harry goes to Bruges to kill Ray himself. Ken meets his boss and tries to stop him.)

H: Well?

K: The boy is suicidal, Harry. He's a walking dead man. Keeps going on about Hell and purgatory ...

H: When I phoned you yesterday, did I ask you, "Ken, will you do me a favor and become Ray's psychiatrist, please?" No. What I think I asked you was, "Could you go blow his head off for me?" Has he killed himself yet? No. So he's not sui is he?

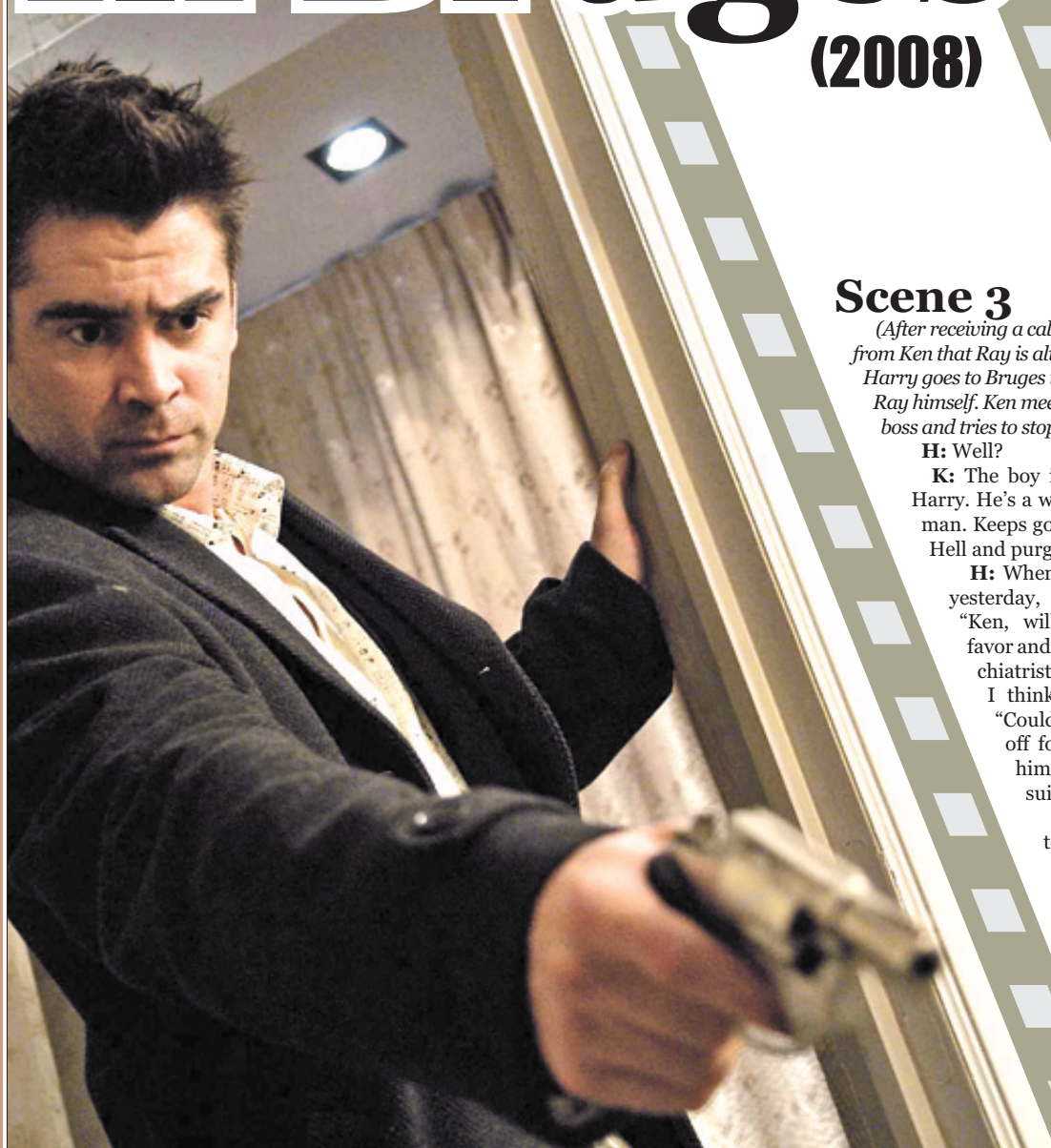
K: He put a loaded gun to his head this morning. I stopped him.

H: He ... What? This gets worse!

K: We were down in the park ...

H: Let me get this right. You were down in the park! Let me get this right. Not only have you refused to kill the boy, you've even stopped the boy from killing himself, which would have solved my problem, which would have solved your problem, which sounds like it would've solved the boy's problem. K if I had killed a little kid, accidentally or otherwise, I wouldn't have thought twice. I'd have killed myself on the spot. On the spot (11)!

In Bruges (2008)



Vocabulary

1. residue: something left after other parts have been taken away

2. a twin room: a room with two beds for two people

3. pop out: here it

means "go out"

4. errand: something to be told or done by one sent somewhere for the purpose

5. coop up: confine in or as if in a coop

6. slam the door: close the door

7. it's his cup of tea: it's what he likes

8. take down: remember

9. a bloke: a British

slang which means a guy

10. buck does not stop with him: he cannot get through it

11. on the spot: right away

(By Wang Yu)